

Fallen Cuba-trained Dr Thulani Chocholo hailed a hero

A PEOPLE'S person who worked hard, had an ever-ready smile and forgave easily. That is how colleagues and friends of the late Dr Thulani Chocholo described the late Cuba-trained doctor at a memorial service held in his honour, at Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital (PMMH) this afternoon (09 February 2017).

Chocholo, 30, whose parents passed away when he was just one year-old, is believed to have collapsed after attending a traditional ceremony on Saturday (04 February 2017). He was rushed to the casualty unit at PMMH, where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

Chocholo was raised by his uncle. In 2007, he applied and was accepted as a beneficiary of the Nelson Mandela/Fidel Castro medical doctor training programme. Having returned to South Africa in 2013 to do his medical internship and community service, he had only been working as a doctor for two years..

Speaking at a packed hall at PMMH, KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, described Chocholo and all doctors who receive their training in Cuba as being highly resilient.

"It's not easy to leave your country of birth as a teenager... to start your manhood in another country and come back as a man. And when all that has happened, you are only able to give two years of your service before passing away. We are saddened. We were expecting almost 50 years of service from this young man."

MEC Dhlomo said Chocholo's untimely passing was a major blow to the Department: "The sudden death of a young healthcare professional is one death too many. The death of a medical doctor is worse. But the death of a young Cuba-trained doctor is a disaster because these are people who are champions of primary health care, which we are advocating in this country because it focuses on prevention of diseases rather than treatment."

MEC Dhlomo hailed Chocholo as a committed health professional that many others could seek to emulate.

"In his short professional life, he was already displaying exceptional qualities in his quest to lend a hand in improving the health status of our people and above all changing the lives of the young people. We know this because we are told that Dr Chocholo would occasionally work with the Ndwedwe Mayor, Cllr BV Chili to offer career guidance and motivational talk to the pupils in Bhamshela, Verulam."

An emotional MEC Dhlomo lamented the fact that over the past few years, the Department had lost a number of doctors, some of them having demised unnaturally.

He proceeded to pay tribute to the following dearly departed doctors, for the contribution they had made to the provision of healthcare:

- Dr Vajinah Mohamed from PMMH who was murdered in 2016;
- Dr Brian Nhlanhla Champion who demised in a car accident in December 2015;
- Dr Samukelisiwe Theodora Sibeko (Camara) from Polela CHC who perished in a car accident;
- Dr Lungile Ndebele in Newcastle who was fatally stabbed by her partner;
- Dr Thokozane Mthalane who was buried at Esikhawini;
- Dr Mkhize from Woodlands, who was stabbed by a patient in Mpumalanga Province;
- Dr Bavesh Sewran, who used to do sessions for at UMgungundlovu, shot dead outside his private practice;
- Dr Gugu Sithole from Mbalenhle CHC who passed away due to complications on surgery;
- Dr Jay Clark from Greys' Hospital who suffered a heart attack;
- Dr Xolani Shezi from Greys' Hospital who perished in a car accident;

- Dr Pearce from St Anne's Hospital who had a heart attack whilst cycling;
- Dr Langelihle Maphumulo from Tongaat who passed away naturally;
- Dr Neil Callings from Greys' who also passed away naturally.

MEC Dhlomo said: "I call upon all health professionals in the province to continue with the good work that Chocholo had started; his chosen profession of improving the health status of our people."

ENDS



KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo comforts members of the Chocholo family.