

Half a million people and counting: KZN Department of Health brings chronic medication to your doorstep

THE need for patients to leave home very early, incur huge travelling costs to get to hospitals and clinics - only to stand in long queues while waiting to pick up their chronic medication - is fast becoming a thing of the past.

Instead, convenience is becoming the order of the day for these patients, who need medication for non-communicable ailments such as diabetes, hypertension, high blood pressure, and others like HIV, Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (DR-TB) – as they can now pick up their medication closer to their homes. This includes, among others, community halls, tribal courts, churches, retail stores, crèches and Operation Sukuma Sakhe War Rooms.

All of this is thanks to the Central Chronic Medication Dispensing and Distribution (CCMDD) programme, which is being rolled out throughout the Department's 11 health districts. Since the launch of the programme in 2014, 504 000 patients are benefitting from the programme at 558 pick-up point across the province. The Department is planning to expand the number of collection points to 746 by the end of 2017/18 financial year.

Today (27 January 2017) KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo announced the large-scale roll-out of the programme at Mzumbe Municipality, where he officially opened a CCMDD pick-up point at the old Nyangwini clinic.

Several speakers, including healthcare users and health professionals, were full of praise for the CCMDD programme, saying that it has helped decongest health facilities and make their lives easier.

MEC Dhlomo said: "Approximately 60% of prescriptions at public sector pharmacies and clinics are for chronic stable patients. This leads to long waiting times at the facilities, and also causes an unnecessary workload on the public facilities as there are better ways of supplying chronic medicines that do not require patients to visit the health facilities. The cost of transport for patient to get facility is significant as some households have low income and rely on state social grants to make ends meet monthly.

"With the implementation of CCMDD, there is little need for patients to collect medicines at the hospital. This model is for chronic stable patients that have been on treatment for a long time and do not require anything additional from the health service. It is agreed internationally that efficient health systems do not require patients to come to hospitals to collect their chronic medicines as many alternative sources for chronic medicines supply in the community can be used. With the CCMDD model there is a central point for the storage of medicines from where they are picked, labelled and packed for an individual patient as per prescription.

"The package is then delivered to a mutually acceptable collection point, which we call the Pick-up-Point. Patients are offered the opportunity to collect their chronic medicines at point that is mutually convenient. The patient receives notification via SMS that the medication has been dispatched by SMS, and is ready for collection. It is highly convenient," said MEC Dhlomo.

The CCMDD programme also offers patients the option of collecting their chronic medicines at the health facility Pick-up-Points (fast queues or adherence clubs).

Patients who wish to take advantage of this system need to register at the DOH facility and choose the Pick-up Point that is convenient to collect the parcel medicine from. They are required to bring their identity document/Passport or permit to register and collect treatment. Collection dates are written on the collection card.

The patient collection card has important information at the back guiding the patient on the collection of the medicine parcel. For any enquiries regarding registration of collection of medicines, patients are

urged to:

- Call the toll-free number: 0800 070 070
- Send a Please-call-me: 073 161 7102

Community Care Givers are able to collect for their patients in line with their itinerary and clinic arrangements with the patient who is not able to visit the clinic. The patients has an opportunity to register the particulars of the relative/treatment buddy who can collect the medication on their behalf should they not be able to collect it themselves.

ENDS



The MEC for Health in Kwazulu-Natal Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo hands over patient Phindile Qumbisa her medication at Nyangwini Clinic



The MEC for Health in Kwazulu-Natal Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo greets patients at Nyangwini Clinic

Pictures Themba Mngomezulu