

# Closure of Umlazi V-section clinic: patients asked to use nearby Gateway Clinic at Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital as a temporary measure (while another nearby building will be converted into a suitable clinic site)

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KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has reassured the public that the closure of Umlazi V-Section Clinic is only a temporary measure.

The MEC says that a nearby government-owned site, which is just across the road from the old clinic, will be converted into a clinic, which will then allow for the services and staff to return to the community.

In the meantime, from today onwards, patients who used to access healthcare services at V-Section Clinic are required to go to the Gateway clinic at Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital (PMMH), which located just 300m away. Staff and equipment from Umlazi V-Section Clinic have also been moved to the Gateway Clinic at PMMH. Yesterday, the Department held a massive gathering at Glebelands Residential Units (hostel), where the community was engaged and informed of these changes.

The closure of Umlazi V-Section Clinic follows a visit by the Health Portfolio Committee from the national government in July 2018, which strongly recommended that the clinic be shut down. This was due to a number of challenges confronting the 64 year-old building, including its small size, which meant that it was congested, and patients with communicable diseases such as TB shared space with mothers and their new-born babies.

Furthermore, its consultation rooms were small and designed in a way that potentially compromised the privacy of patients.

"This has been a difficult decision:said MEC Dhlomo, this morning. "However, we had no choice but to close the clinic when we considered the reasons that were advanced by the portfolio committee. It was difficult to resist listening to the findings of the portfolio committee. As part of the same Government, we had to abide."

"This is a house that was donated to the Government. It used to be a good clinic when the community was still small, but not anymore. You have to understand that when you come to this clinic on a busy day, you'll have children on one side of the passage, alongside mothers with babies as young as five days. On the other side, you had a list of chairs with people who are coming in to either collect their medication for TB, ARVs, hypertension and diabetes. You therefore risked mixing people who aren't supposed to mix. You then ran the risk of getting infections crossing over from adults to newborn babies. You can't risk that.

"Secondly, our staff members have to wear masks every day. The reason for that is that it is heavily congested. When you've got an emergency at this facility, you couldn't get an ambulance to come up to collect anybody who needed help. The ambulance had to park on the road side. The safety and security of our staff members was also not guaranteed when they had to park their cars outside the premises. And when you had an emergency from the clinic, you had to move all the cars out here, to gain access. There were too many reasons why the facility couldn't continue to function. "

"You can't come to a clinic with a particular ailment, and leave feeling worse off due to something that you've picked up. Also, you can't not protect your staff members when they're working in such an environment."

MEC Dhlomo said the delay in closing the facility since July was due to the need to inform every stakeholder and bring them on board.

"We had to consult widely. This entailed meeting with the clinic committee and local leadership and the unions. We've also indicated that a spot has been identified next to the police station, which is a building that is owned by the Department of Public Works. We've already started negotiations with MEC Mr Ravi Pillay to access that building and convert it into a clinic. Meanwhile, we have asked our clients to move to Gateway Clinic, where staff from the clinic have been moved to. So, we will get to service our clients at that spot until the new clinic has been completed."

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