

KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo lends a helping hand at EG and Usher Memorial hospital, treats patients and congratulates community service officers' willingness to work in align rural area

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KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo is spending the next two days treating patients in the Out-Patients Department ward at EG & Usher Memorial Hospital in Kokstad, as part of his community service. The MEC has also thanked the 19 healthcare professionals – including three doctors – who began their one year community service at the hospital two weeks ago. They are part of a cohort of more than 1000 healthcare professionals who have been deployed on the mandatory community service programme at public health facilities throughout the province.

At EG & Usher - which had no community service officers last year due to administrative challenges - there are currently three doctors; four pharmacists; four nurses; one occupational therapist; one speech therapist; one audiologist; one radiographer; one psychologist; a dentist; a physiotherapist; and a dietician. The MEC did rounds at all the hospital wards, where he encouraged nursing staff to continue working hard to serve the public.

He also encouraged mothers to breastfeed their babies exclusively for a minimum of the first six months, adding that benefits of this are plentiful as it makes them more immune to diseases.

Between 10am and 13h00 MEC Dhlomo, who is a qualified doctor, had treated no fewer than 10 patients who had emergencies and had had one of them admitted, and was due to continue throughout the day, and again tomorrow.

The MEC said he is aware of the shortage of healthcare personnel at the hospital, and also thanked the community service officers, many of whom are from urban areas, for making a sacrifice to help improve healthcare service delivery for their fellow compatriots.

MEC Dhlomo said: *"I had made a promise that I would visit EG & Usher Hospital Last year, this hospital was not allocated community service healthcare professionals. I've come to congratulate the process that has allowed us to have so many community service officers, and to commend these young professionals for coming to this hospital which is in a far-flung area. These are youngsters, and sometimes you find that they are not willing to come to such hospitals. So, it is commendable of them to have made an effort. Having done rounds at this hospital in all wards, and I'm really excited about the progress that this hospital has made. This facility is among the hospitals which are doing exceptionally well regarding maternal outcomes. They are, however, having challenges because they are on the border of KZN and the Eastern Cape, and many other patients come in from the Eastern Cape, which causes a challenges in terms of tracing them and following up on those who are on TB or HIV treatment, and also those who have delivered."*

Three community service doctors who were interviewed by the Department's Corporate Communications unit, but asked to remain anonymous, said they are pleased to be making a difference in the lives of ordinary people in a rural setting. One of them said: *"I've enjoyed the hospital, and the fact that you see things that you don't usually get a chance to see at medical school, and even when you're doing your internship. That's been nice. It's also been nice trying to learn how to cope when dealing with patients in front of you that are complicated, so that's been for me the biggest thing."*

Another doctor said: *For me it's nice to be in small town where you feel appreciated. You feel like your work does make a difference. You get people at ground level, you can make a difference in their lives and they feel it. You go out and you feel like you've helped them. Coming from a tertiary institution where all the work has been pretty much done and you're taking over management of a patient.. Over here, you're working with people from the ground up. You can kind of decide what needs to be done. All the initial treatment, initial worries, consultations... It's a different experience. It's really valuable."*

A third doctor said: *I have enjoyed the experience being here, and it is heartening to see... There are senior doctors who've worked here for many years, that's out of their commitment to the community. They're not in it for anything but to make people better, and so I've enjoyed the experience and the mentorship that comes with that. It also seems that they're more appreciative here when you do help them."*



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[Remarks by Community Service Doctors](#)



Speaker of Harry Gwala District

Ms with 80 year-old patient Christina Nyangula and MEC



Dhlomo
Sinovuyo Dumisa and her daughter,

MEC Dhlomo with



Hlela Hospital CEO Ms Nomawethu Binase with Harry Gwala health district director Ms Lindiwe Zuma, council speaker Cllr. Tiny Nosisa Jojozi and MEC



Dhlomo Rev Tambo with Ms Binase and MEC Dhlomo

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