

Nearly 2 million people now fetch their chronic medication closer to their homes(No need to pay transport costs or wake up early to stand in long queues)

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No fewer than 1,7 million people in KwaZulu-Natal are now collecting their chronic medication closer to their homes, without having to spend money on transport fare or wake up very early to stand in long queues at congested healthcare facilities. Thanks to the Central Chronic Medicine Dispensation and Distribution (CCMDD) programme, more KZN citizens are also adhering to their chronic medication, and hospitals and clinics are less congested.

This is according to KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo who, on Friday, officially opened Ombimbini and KaHhewulana clinics under Ulundi Municipality. Since the launch of the CCMDD programme in 2014, 4557 chronic medication pick-up points have been established across the province.

"We are very pleased with the success of this programme," said MEC Dhlomo. "It means that our fellow compatriots who are hypertensive, or diabetic, or those who have arthritis, HIV and other ailments only have to come to a health facility once after three months to collect their medicine. Otherwise, they are fetching their it closer to their homes, at libraries, community halls, tribal courts and other local amenities. The medication is pre-packaged and all looks the same, which helps eliminate stigma because no-one can tell what the medication is for. "The CCMDD programme has reduced waiting times; improved access to chronic medication and decongested our health facilities. It has also helped to improve adherence to treatment. We would therefore like to encourage more people to take advantage of this programme. It is extremely convenient for patients, and us as healthcare workers because it has the potential and impact to reduce long queues when we see patients once every 90 days."

Patients who wish to use the CCMDD programme need to register at their nearest health facility and choose the pick-up point that is convenient to collect the 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. Patients will receive updates on the delivery of their medication via SMS.

They can also register other people to collect the medication on their behalf. (For inquiries, call the toll-free number 0800 070 070 or send a "please-call-me" to 073 161 7102.)



The MEC said he was pleased that Ombimbini and KaHhemulana clinics - built at a cost of R17,5 million and R16,7million respectively - have been officially opened and are functioning well.

He did, however, express concern at the low statistics for child immunisation in the area, and the high rate of teenage pregnancy.

“We are here to say that children under the age of 18 should not be falling pregnant at a young age, because while we urge them to abstain, those who cannot are offered contraceptives free of charge.

These clinics are equipped with Adolescent and Youth User-friendly services, as well as the Happy Hour feature. This means that from 15h00 to 16h00 young girls and boys can visit the clinic and be consulted by a nurse who is friendly, understanding and ready to give advice on any aspect that pertains to their requirements, including their sexual reproductive health needs.

“We are also saying that mothers should ensure that their babies are immunized according to schedule. And all people who come from different areas need not die from treatable ailments because they now have these facilities where they can be screened and treated. They should know that these clinics operate five days a week for eight hours each day, and the nurses are on call for all emergencies. We urge them to make use of the services offered here even if it is just for check-up purposes.”

MEC Dhlomo also moved to assure the public that the nearby Thulasizwe Hospital would not be closed, as has been speculated

"We want to give our assurance that it is not in our plans to close that hospital, or remove services. We can't do that because, just last week, we announced our taking over of the Siloah Lutheran Hospital just 30km away from here. It is inconceivable that one hand we would be taking over a hospital that was about to close, and then on the other hand close down a facility that the community needs."