

Oncology Service have been restored at Addington Hospital; first patient seen by mid-day, more to follow

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The KZN Department of Health is pleased to announce that, contrary to misleading reports in the media, the first oncology patient was seen at Addington Hospital earlier today. This paves the way for the full restoration of oncology services at the hospital, which will help scores of patients who need cancer treatment.

The 73 year-old grandmother, from kwaJali in Harding, underwent radiotherapy in the oncology unit at Addington Hospital. The procedure began at 13h00 and took place under the watchful eye of newly-appointed oncologist Dr Nokwanda Zuma and her team. It was over in less than five minutes. The soft-spoken grandmother of four was diagnosed with cervical cancer at Port Shepstone Hospital last year.

Dr Zuma, who graduated as an oncologist from about two weeks ago after completing her training at Tygerberg Hospital in Cape Town, said: *"The patient has locally advanced cervical cancer. Fortunately, it is at a stage where we can still cure her. We'll give her the whole treatment... some external beam radiation, some cervical bracket therapy, which means giving radiation close to the tumour and then we'll continue treating her. Unfortunately, because of her age, we won't give her chemotherapy, which is the standard for her stage of cancer. Her treatment is going to continue for the next three weeks. She'll be treated every day, from Monday to Thursday while she's getting her radiation. After three weeks, we would have finished her treatment and she can go home. We'll see her again after six weeks so that we can see how she's doing, and how she's coping with the treatment. And then we'll follow up after three months so see how she's doing, for about five years."* Shortly after undergoing the procedure, Ms Mhlamvu said: *"I've been told that I'm the first patient to be treated at Addington Hospital since the machine was repaired. I'll be happy if this treatment leads to a cure."*

Acting Head of Department Dr Musa Gumede said: *"Today was the first day to test that all functions are up and running. We can confirm that one machine is now functional at Addington and patients will now be scheduled for treatment. The second oncology machine has also arrived at Addington, and is currently being installed. These machines are highly technological, and require software upgrades, calibration and other configurations. But we are confident that it will also soon be up and running. With one machine already working, we have already begun to alleviate pressure from Inkosi Albert Luthuli Hospital. Once the second one is up and running, we will be able to significantly reduce the burden of oncology cases in the province."* Oncology services are also available at Inkosi Albert Central, Grey's Hospital, and in the north of the province, at Ngwelezane and Queen Nandi Hospitals, through an arrangement that the Department has with the Joint Medical Holdings (JMH) Group. Dr Gumede emphasised that the key to preventing cancer and/or successfully treating it lies in screening and testing, which ensures early detection before the cancer spreads.



The 73 year-old patient is seen here with Thuso Ramoloko (physicist), Dr Nokwanda Zuma (oncologist), Malenta Solomon (radiotherapist), Natasha Maharaj (radiotherapist), Teresha Pillay (radiotherapist), Thabisile Hlengwa (radiotherapy manager) and Philani Mazibuko (chief therapist). Photos: Agiza Hlongwane/KZN Dept of Health.