

Media invitation : KZN Dept of Health aims for record-breaking 1000 smears in one day

Dear Media Colleague,

KZN MEC for Health Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo cordially invites you to the mass Pap Smear Drive campaign on Saturday, 21 April, at Inkosi Albert Luthuli Hospital, where an attempt to break the record by performing 1000 Pap Smear tests in one day will be made.

This is part of the “Phila Ma” campaign, whose objective is to create public awareness about the deadly breast and cervical cancers (cervical cancer causes more deaths among women in South Africa than any other cancer), while promoting screening to ensure early detection and treatment of cancer.

This number of Pap Smears (1000) has never been done in one place on the same day in South Africa or on the African continent.

(Fortis Hospital at Vashi, Mumbai, screened over 751 women in an 8 hour marathon screening, setting a Guinness World Record for the highest number of cervical cancer screenings, on 23 December 2012. They beating the earlier record of 350 participants held by Kaiser Permanente, San Diego (USA) achieved on the 29th of January 2011.)

Both cervical and breast cancer are preventable and can be successfully treated if women present at health facilities regularly, and get screened so that interventions can be made early if cancer is found.

One of the mechanisms of testing for cervical cancer is the Pap Smear, which is a simple screening for precancerous cells which could lead to cervical cancer if left untreated. Regular screening can greatly reduce a woman's risk of dying from cervical cancer.

In its quest to detect cervical cancer early, the Department uses Liquid-Based Cytology (LBC), which is considered to be an alternative to conventional cytological investigations. With LBC, a spatula or brush/broom-like device is used to collect cells (in the same way as for conventional cytology), and then the cells are put into a liquid medium and transported to the laboratory for processing and reading .

This ensures a good quality and clean slide which is easier to interpret, and reduces the need for repeat pap smear thus saving costs. With the strengthening of early detection, there will be fewer cases of advanced cancer that will require chemotherapy, radiotherapy and surgery.

The Department, in partnership with the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) is mobilising women at eThekweni and surrounding areas to be part of this screening drive which will be manned by volunteers including specialists, doctors, nurses and ordinary citizens.

Details of the event are as follows:

- Date : Saturday, 21 April 2018
- Venue: Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital
- Time : 08h00

Please RSVP as soon as possible to Samkelisiwe Khumalo on Samkelisiwe.Khumalo@kznhealth.gov.za