

32% Increase in KZN early bookings for anti-natal (pregnancy) clinics: MEC Dhlomo thanks CCGs, mothers and healthcare professionals

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The number of pregnant KZN women who book for antenatal clinics during the first five months has risen from 40% to 72% in just three years, thanks to the efforts of Community Care Givers (CCGs).

This means that healthcare professionals are now able to detect more underlying ailments such as HIV, hypertension and others - which may pose a threat to the pregnant woman and her unborn baby - much earlier.

This ground-breaking achievement was revealed by KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo during the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Queen Nandi Memorial Hospital (previously known as Lower Umfolozi Regional War Memorial Hospital) on Friday.

As part of their health education and promotion work, the Department's 10 200 CCGs visit homes throughout the province, and, among other tasks, screen women and girls aged 15 and upwards for pregnancy. Those who test positive for pregnancy are urged to visit a health facility where they are then booked for ante-natal clinics. This pregnancy screening programme was introduced in 2015

Speaking on the sidelines of the 100th anniversary ceremony, MEC Dhlomo said: *"It is encouraging to notice that we're already seeing the results of mothers who are pregnant and come to our clinics early, before 20 weeks. Currently, up to 72% are attending our antenatal clinics for the first time. When we started with this campaign, only 40% of pregnant women were coming forward during this period. This is an amazing story because it gives us a very positive outcome. Most of those women, if they're HIV positive they'll be started on treatment much earlier. If those mothers have any other illness and a need for any treatment, we're able to intervene much earlier. And we guarantee them a safe and good life. That is why transmission of HIV from the mother to the baby has been so significantly reduced."*

KZN has managed to reduce the rate of Mother-To-Child Transmission of HIV from 20% in 2008 to the current just 1,2%.

Founded in 1918 and situated at Empangeni, Queen Nandi Regional Hospital is dedicated exclusively to the care of obstetrical, gynaecological and neonatal patients. The 369-bed hospital averages approximately 8,000 deliveries, and performs approximately 2,000 gynaecological surgery procedures, per year.

Following a walk-about at the hospital, MEC Dhlomo said, *"I was very happy to learn from hospital management the strides they've made in terms of saving mothers, and saving babies, and I can confirm and see their good work."*



“Among other things that the province has benefited from, from this hospital is the support that it gives to other hospitals not only around King Cetshwayo District (where it is located), but also those at Umkhanyakude and Zululand districts... It is important for them to continue giving that support, which is excellent.”

MEC Dhlomo did, however, express concern that some children still suffer from Severe Acute Malnutrition, and pledged that Government will work hard to reduce its incidence.

“That is something that we should have wiped away a long time ago through Operation Sukuma Sakhe. We’ll have to strengthen those programmes, because we’ve already identified which part of the province these children come from, which means we’ll have to go to those areas that were reported.”

He encouraged women to breastfeed their babies exclusively, at least for the first six months of their lives, and also adhere to the immunization schedule.

“There will always be childhood diseases, but children who are breastfed, and who receive their immunization, will enjoy protection from such diseases so that they can grow and develop and realise their potential.”