

Horror road crash survivor is full of praise for Doctors, Nurses and overall quality of care at Madadeni and Grey's Hospital

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The 30 year-old survivor of a near-fatal crash near Vryheid has thanked the staff of Madadeni and Grey's Hospitals for their professionalism and kindness when rescuing her from death's door. She is full of praise for both hospitals' level of cleanliness, availability of medication, quality of food and an overall positive staff ethos of wanting to help – all of which has drawn applause from KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo.

Ms Yola Nyamela was rescued by unknown Good Samaritans after losing control of her car while driving along Blood River towards Vryheid. She says she will never forget that night, on 01 February 2019, when her car rolled several times and she sustained spinal fractures, in which some of her broken bones pierced the skin, causing a risk of infection.

"When I woke up, I was lying alone in the bushes and had no cellphone to reach out for help. I was bleeding profusely. It was dark, and I prayed that someone should find me. Within about an hour, I heard human voices and they called help for me," she said.

An ambulance from the KZN Department of Health's Emergency Medical Services arrived and rushed her to Madadeni Hospital, where the treatment she received kept getting better and better. *"I was in so much pain, I was so afraid. The doctors at Madadeni Hospital's casualty unit were so kind to me. Dr Zakhele Khoza and others... they told me that I had bad injuries on my spine, but they would do all that was possible to save me. The ambulance team were so great. They made sure that I travel safely, without causing any more damage."*

She was transferred to Grey's Hospital the next day, where she was to be further blown away by the level of service that she received. *"The spine team of Dr Sandile Mwelase and Dr Alberto Puddu literally held my hand through the whole process, assuring me that I was going to be okay. The team of orthopaedic doctors at Grey's also supported me a great deal."*

For Ms Nyamela, who hails from Mount Ayliff in the Eastern Cape, the crash couldn't have come at a worse time. She had just lost her job at a telecommunications company in Durban two months earlier, and the single mother of a 9 year-old boy was looking to start over. She says her experience at both hospitals has changed her perceptions of the public healthcare system.



The team from

Madadeni Hospital. Dr Khoza is seated on the right



"It was my first experience in a state hospital and I was so afraid of how it would be. But I really got the best team, the theatre nurses were even praying for me when I went for procedures. I had been so afraid as I had no support from family. I lost my grandparents, who were my support system and have no siblings. I just want to say thank you to the doctors and all medical staff involved in my journey of recovery. Sometimes doctors heal more than just our physical pain when they show care. I know that when I was told I had C-Spine injuries and could potentially be paralysed, all I wanted was euthanasia to end my life, except that it wasn't legal in SA. The doctors told me that they would save my life and they did."

Ms Nyamela was so moved by the experience that she wrote a letter to the Department, expressing her gratitude. *"I'm 30 years old and this was my second accident (the first was in 2005, PMB, while I was a passenger). I've really gone through a tough time after losing my grandparents trying to make it in a big world. Thank you so much for giving me hope, and saving my life. If there's any way that I could give back to the KZN Department of Health I would do it. This experience has touched my life, and I hope you can do it for many, many more people. Thank you to the Minister of Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi; the KZN MEC for Health Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, and all your teams,"* she wrote.

And what has the experienced taught her about the public health system, which caters for 80% of the country's population?

“The level of care that I received showed me that South Africa as a developing state and growing democracy upholds the constitutional obligation of guaranteed access for every citizen to healthcare, and state-of-the-art infrastructure. The medical teams were diverse and highly knowledgeable and patient with imparting knowledge, specifically regarding medical procedures such as surgery and the pros and cons thereof. The facilities were clean. The food was able to cater to different medical/dietary requirements. There was ready access to medication at all times, day and night. At the core of all of this was a spirit of Ubuntu among the patients and the medical teams, which fostered a sense of optimism in my journey of recovery. All in all, the public healthcare system reflected huge improvements and capabilities, considering the number of patients that were flocking in on a daily with various medical needs. I was so inspired even though in pain that I secretly desired to be part of the people that woke up every day to save lives, as I realised that our country requires citizens who are willing to contribute to the changes that they desire to see. I could really go on and on,” she says.

Since being discharged on 12 February 2019, she’s been on the road to recovery. *“Since I’m doing it all alone it’s been hard, but by the grace of God I’m getting there.”*

She also has a special message for the Good Samaritans who came to her aid on that night that she wishes to forget.

“I unfortunately do not know who those people were or where they came from. I would have loved to thank them. I still do.”

In response to Ms Nyamela’s experience, MEC Dhlomo said: *“It is most heartening to come across an experience such as the one shared by Ms Nyamela. We are glad that she survived the crash, and is on the road to recovery. A story like this, while remarkable, proves what we already know... that this Department is full of angels of mercy, who do incredible work to save lives and bring hope to our fellow compatriots. We congratulate the staff of Madadeni and Grey’s Hospitals. They must keep it up. Hopefully, it will inspire even the few who may perhaps not be as dedicated to their work.”*