

Newly-launched "impilo iyasetshenzelwa" Campaign to boost uptake in health screening and testing, and lead to early detection of diseases

20 January 2019

KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo says that if more people came forward to get screened and tested before feeling sick, fewer would die from deadly silent killer diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, stroke and cancer.

He says that if such diseases are detected early, patients can be initiated on treatment quicker, and live longer and healthier lives. The MEC was speaking at Okhahlamba in Bergville yesterday, during the provincial launch of "*Impilo iyasetshenzelwa*" campaign. The campaign is a call to action for citizens to rise up and work for their own health, and will be spread across the province.

"Impilo iyasetshenzelwa" means let's strive to live longer and be responsible for our own well-being. We tabled this concept before cabinet and it was unanimously accepted, which motivated us. We had decided that it would be launched by the Premier, at his district, uThukela

Unfortunately because of other government work, he was not able to be with us. But we have his blessings to continue with this programme.

"This programme is the expansion of the vision of Thuma Mina (Send Me), and uses the tools of the National Health Insurance, where we are saying when our clinics are full, why don't we take services to the people, through outreach programmes, and meet people who otherwise think they are well and not sick, and examine them and give them health screening services. We are calling on people to respond to this campaign by availing themselves to come forward, get tested and live healthily. There is evidence that when diseases are detected early, the chances of treating them or managing them successfully are much higher."

During the launch of this campaign, scores of people received screening for their eye-sight and blood pressure, and other conditions. Many among the elderly received optical glasses as well as walking aids.

MEC Dhlomo urged women over 30 years of age to undergo a Pap Smear, and those even younger to get into the habit of inspecting their breasts for abnormal lumps – and seek urgent medical attention when they discover them.

He also urged men over 50 to be examined for prostate cancer (40 – 45 for those with a family history of this type of cancer, which places them at high risk).

MEC Dhlomo said Impilo iyasetshenzelwa campaign was modeled on countries with a strong ethos of healthy lifestyle, disease prevention and high life expectancy, such as China, Cuba and Brazil.

"In those countries, people come to clinics out of their own volition, to seek help, and seek screening. Those countries are able to have a life expectancy of up to 80 or 85. When you have a healthy population, it is good for the economy. A country with a high life expectancy, where there are youngsters of 15 years, with parents aged 35, grandparents aged 60, and great grandparents of 85 years, is able to sustain its cultures and norms. And that can only be a good thing."