

Speech by MEC Neliswa Nkonyeni on the occasion of the World Health Day celebrations at Royal Show Grounds

7 April 2006

Dr Lee Jong-wook, Director-General of the World Health Organisation explicitly explains that **World Health Day 2006** gives us all an opportunity to celebrate the remarkable contribution to human health and development made by health workers.

He goes on to say, without a strong health workforce, advances in healthcare cannot reach and benefit the people who need them.

We cannot agree with him more.

Dear colleagues since **1950** the World Health Organisation has been celebrating the World Health Day with different themes and will continue doing so. Last year, it was:

Make every mother and every Child count.

In the year 2000, it was: ***Safe Blood Starts with Me***

In 1995, it was: ***Global Polio Eradication***

Now for the first time this year, it is deviating from addressing issues that pertain to the community, our clients and is drawing focus on us as Health Practitioners, Health Workers, Professionals and

caregivers. The Theme for this year is *Working together for health*, how befitting.

The concern for Health workers is not just raised and confined to this event of April 7.

The World Health Organisation expects us to use this forum as a launch for a long-term advocacy program for which activities will be undertaken and resources provided well beyond this day.

As a department of Health in this province, we are happy to announce that we already have plans that will pay attention to the **Comprehensive Wellness** of all our employees, well beyond this day. We have seen it appropriate to have a Wellness Component that will pay attention to the following aspects:

- **Employee's Assistance Programme**
- **Gender Mainstreaming**
- **HIV and AIDS in the workplace**
- **Occupational Health and Safety**

Our employees must get to know that we have mechanisms that are there to provide a constructive and confidential counselling service which will assist them and their dependents in preventing and dealing with problems that overwhelm them, be it psychological or physical problems.

Our focus here include among things:

job stresses,

HIV and Aids

Depression and anxiety,

marital and family problems,

financial and legal problems,

drugs and alcohol problems.

We paying attention to these issues because we know that when left unattended they eventually do affect job performance and could ultimately jeopardize a persons' continued employment.

Beside the above, we are appealing to you to see to it that in the environment that you work in that there is compliance with the **Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1993**. This surely will guarantee a prevention of work related injuries and disease.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Bill of Rights, supported by the Constitution, declares that *Health Care is a basic Human Right*. This can forever remain a slogan if you, the people in the coalface of anguish, despair and disease can abdicate your responsibilities.

Today, I want to fully agree with Dr Lee Jong-wook, in that we have to unreservedly appreciate and thank you for the individual and collective sacrifices you

make towards the realisation of our vision as a department. Remember we aim to achieve optimal health status for all persons in the Province of KwaZulu Natal, including ourselves.

We sincerely acknowledge that our country's health system faces the most intricate human resource demands. We agree that the production of health professionals does not keep up with the demand for supplying personnel geared to deal with the increasing burden of disease. Worst of all, most of you are overworked, and that is a fact.

We are at the same time hopeful that the **Human Resources Health Plan** that will be unveiled by the National Minister together with her MEC's later today in Pretoria will assist in curbing this global problem.

Our optimism stem from the **core guiding principles** of the plan, which among other aspects say:

- South Africans must enjoy a reliable supply of skilled and competent health professionals for self-sufficiency.
- Planning and development of human resources linked to the needs and demands of the health system
- Health workers must have the capacity and appropriate skills to render accessible, appropriate and high quality care at all levels.

Whilst the whole country is working on the plan to balance health worker categories, aligning and

synergising scopes of practice, we in the meantime, are expected to ensure that we remain in good health.

Here are the top **10 Health Checks** are intended to keep us on the know:

- Do the Breast check
- The body mass check
- The oral health check, once every 6 months
- The blood pressure check, once a year
- The cholesterol check
- The eye check
- The pap smear, once every 3 years
- The HIV and AIDS test
- The chlamydia test, through your gynaecologist
- The pregnancy test

Look after yourselves. The people, the province and the country need you.

Again I say, from the guard at the gate to a surgeon in theatre, from the clerk at the desk to the paramedic at an accident scene, we implore you to remain committed, we need you.

From the bottom of my heart, I love you all.