NATIONAL HEALTH PLAN
Making health care a right, not a privilege

• Circumcision
• Health Ombuds Office
• Medicine use
• ...and a pull-out Comic!

health
Department:
Health
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Fighting Disease, Fighting Poverty, Giving Hope
This month marks 20 years of democracy in our beloved country. It’s a major milestone as we look back at where we were, how far we’ve come and how much further we have to go before we can truly pat ourselves on the back for a job well done.

“History will judge us harshly if we do not deal with the pandemic of AIDS,” were the words of our late president, Nelson Mandela (may his soul rest in peace). As the MEC for Health in KZN, it pains me to note that our beloved Province has the unenviable reputation of having the most diseases. But, the tide is turning for the first time—and that is, without a doubt, a huge credit to everyone living and working in this Province.

While the rest of the country—if not the world—looked on in despair at our challenges, we continued to work harder to improve services, against all odds and lacking resources. We have achieved incredible progress in health care delivery in KwaZulu-Natal and it is something to be proud of.

As we reflect on our young democracy, I would like to thank all health workers as well as those health foot soldiers who work tirelessly in communities as caregivers and volunteers. It is thanks to your efforts that we are able to proudly say that KZN is changing for the better. Some of our health achievements include:

- Reduction in maternal and child deaths
- Fewer deaths from HIV/AIDS related illnesses
- New clinics, revamping of hospitals and state of the art mobile clinics
- Increases in life expectancy—more people are living longer
- Better and faster diagnosis and treatment of TB
- More doctors, nurses, community caregivers and midwives
- Free vaccine to young girls to ensure protection against certain cancers
- Successful circumcision program resulting in 100% success without a single death in the Province.

These are just a few reasons to celebrate our 20 years of democracy, but we have a long way to go. I would like to invite you all to join me as we continue our journey to making this a Province we can all be proud of. Twenty years ago very few people in South Africa and indeed the world, would have believed that death rates from HIV and AIDS could be reduced. We have proven them wrong and we must continue to make progress until our Province is no longer the one with the highest rate of diseases. We can make it happen.

As Tata Madiba once said: “it always seems impossible until it’s done.”

SAVING MOTHERS
SAVING BABIES

FACTS FOR LIFE

Are you pregnant? Have you discussed HIV with your doctor or healthcare worker? As a pregnant woman, it is very important that you know your HIV status so that you can learn how to stay strong and healthy and prevent passing HIV to your baby. It is best to see your doctor or healthcare worker as soon as you think you are pregnant.

If you have HIV, you can make sure your baby does not. With counselling, health care and antiretroviral medicines for you and your baby there is a more than 98 per cent chance that your baby will not get HIV.

Give your baby the gift of life and get tested at your local clinic today.
CIRCUMCISION –
Still the best way to reduce the spread of HIV

SO WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

For many young men, the thought of circumcision can be scary, especially when you hear of stories when things go wrong. But the truth is the province of KwaZulu-Natal is proud to say that there has not been a single death or botched operation from circumcisions done by medically trained professionals – and thousands of young men are being circumcised each year, giving them the best chance of reducing the spread of HIV. So conquer your fear with knowledge and do something that not only provides you with the best chance of protection against sexual disease but also improves your chances of good health. After all, OUR MAJESTY KING GOODWILL ZWELITHINI would not have revived the culture of circumcision among Zulu youth if he did not believe it had any health benefits!

Take Musa, a 25-year old from Nongoma. He was recently circumcised at a local clinic and says he decided to do it after reading about the health benefits. “I did not do it because everyone I knew was doing it, or because it is part of my culture and so on, but for my own health. I read about it so that I could understand the benefits and it made sense to me, so I felt confident and comfortable about doing it. I am also getting married soon and wanted to make sure that I have a healthy sexual relationship with my wife in the future. I wanted her to feel safe and sure that I am acting responsibly for both of us,” he explains with a smile.

FACT:
Circumcision reduces the spread of HIV by up to 70%!

Still in doubt? Just check out some of the medical benefits of circumcision:

- Reduces transmission of sexually transmitted diseases
- Helps reduce the risk of bladder and prostate problems at an older age
- Helps reduce the chances of penis cancer
- Helps reduce the risk of cervical cancer by about 20%, because the virus can live under the foreskin of men
- Infections to the urinary and other glands is reduced
- Circumcised penis is easy to clean, does not smell and partners enjoy better sex

REMEMBER! Circumcision can help reduce transmission of HIV/Aids, but does not protect people who have many sexual partners. The only way to avoid HIV/Aids is to have one faithful partner and use protection when having sex.

Your suggestions and comments are welcome, and if you have been impressed by a health worker who provided an outstanding service, let us know and we will feature them! CONTACT US on 031 562 9803, write to us on PO Box 25439, Gateway 4321 or email editor@ezempilohealthmatters.co.za

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DON’T WALK ALONE

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Medicines can be used effectively to heal and treat many diseases, whether it is traditional medicine or modern. But it's important to use them safely. Used improperly, medicines can hurt and even kill you.

Some medicines can be dangerous for a pregnant or breastfeeding woman and can also cause harm to her baby.

To avoid the incorrect use, cut out and keep the following guide and teach others in your community and school on how to use medicines to get the most benefit from them.

**GET ADVICE FROM YOUR HEALTH WORKER** before taking any medicine and make sure you understand:

- How often to take each day and for how many days.
- Take the full amount required. If you stop taking the medicine too soon, the problem may come back. Completing the treatment is especially important for TB.
- Know the warning signs for any problems the medicine may cause (read the side effects).
- Know it if it reacts badly with some foods and ask whether you should take it before or after eating.
- Avoid taking many medicines at the same time. Some medicines can stop others from working.
- Make sure the package is labelled clearly and correctly.

**AVOID MEDICINES THAT ARE OLD:** It is best to use a medicine before its expiry date. This date is written in small print on the package or the bottle. Sometimes, expired medicines are better than no medicine at all, but only use them on advice of your health worker. Do not use them if they are:

- Pills that are starting to fall apart or change colour
- Capsules that are stuck together or changed shape
- Clear liquids that are cloudy
- Injections
- Eye drops
- Medicines that require mixing.

**WARNING:** IF YOU HAVE TAKEN A MEDICINE AND THEN GET A SKIN RASH, SWELLING OF THE MOUTH OR HAVE DIFFICULTY BREATHING, STOP TAKING THE MEDICINE AND GET MEDICAL HELP IMMEDIATELY.

**REMEMBER** the following people need to be careful and must get advice before taking medicine:

- Pregnant or breastfeeding women (anything they take can be passed onto the baby, causing harm).
- People with a long-term liver or kidney disease. Your liver and kidneys clear the medicine from your body, if they are not working well, the medicine may build up and become poisonous.
- Those suffering from stomach ulcer. Medicines such as aspirin can cause bleeding in the stomach and/or a painful burning feeling.

Make sure the medicine is necessary – don’t just take it because you think it might help!
Our health system is changing

Don’t let the stories confuse you. Get the facts.

FOCUS ON NHI

Why do we need a new health system?

Healthcare is a human right and this should not depend on how much we earn. Even though the government has tried its best to undo the damage caused by apartheid, which provided health services to a few while ignoring the majority of the population, the reality is large numbers of our people continue to die and to suffer unnecessarily from poor health. For this reason, government decided to change how health care is delivered, so that every person has a right to health care – no matter what colour, race, age or religion. It also wants to ensure that health care is mainly free.

Our current health system is mainly ‘curative’ – what does this mean?

This means that we spend more time and money curing people than preventing the diseases. Under the NHl, it will be more about prevention, so that people know what leads to diseases and how to prevent them so that there is less need to go to the hospital each time and fewer people will get sick. That way, our health facilities will not be so overcrowded and will be able to offer the best possible care to those who really need it. This will reduce costs which can be spent more effectively on training more health professionals for areas that need them the most.

Who will pay for the NHl?

The NHl will be mainly funded in three ways: government funds (through tax), employee’s contributions and a deduction from salaries of people who earn above R60,000 per year.

Will the unemployed be able to get free health care under the NHl?

Yes. The NHl is aimed at providing equal health care to all South Africans and registered citizens. If you are unemployed, a student, or earning less than R60,000 per year you will still be able to receive free medical care. Those who are not registered South Africans and tourists will not be able to access free medical care under the NHl, but can still receive care in an emergency.

I heard the National Health Insurance will mean we pay more taxes, is this true?

No. 95% of the funding for the NHl is already there. Government needs to find a way to raise the remaining 5%, and this will not be done by taxing people more. Other ways of raising more money are being looked at, such as increasing taxes on things like alcohol etc. The NHl will not place a burden on people’s income.

How will the NHl benefit pregnant women and children?

Under the new plan, women, children, the elderly and the youth will receive priority care. There will be reduced waiting times, more resources, better qualified staff and most importantly, government will monitor the performance of health staff to make sure that you are getting the quality of service expected.

What about doctors?

Every Primary Health Care Centre will have doctors who will be able to treat you there or refer you to the nearest hospital if needed. The Department of Health is already training and recruiting more doctors so that when the new health plan is fully rolled out within the next 13 years, our facilities are equipped to cope.

Will the NHl be free for all kinds of services?

The NHl will offer all South Africans and legal residents access to a wide range of essential health services. It will offer care at all levels, from primary health care to specialised care. But such luxuries as cosmetic surgery to get thin or make your wrinkles disappear will be excluded!

How will services be monitored?

Under the new health plan, government will have strict guidelines with which every provider who is registered must comply. A watchdog body called the Office of Health Standards Compliance has already been established to make sure that standards are met.

You may have heard something about it. Our government is changing the way it cares for our health. It’s called the National Health Insurance (NHl) plan and will be rolled out completely within the next 13 years. It’s already being ‘tested’ in a few areas, including UMgungundlovu, Umzinyathi and Amajuba Districts in KZN. The idea of this is to test what needs to be done and how to overcome challenges before rolling out the plan across the country.
ZAMA, HAVE YOU TAKEN ANDILE FOR HIS INJECTION YET?

ZAMA, IT’S FREE FOR YOUR CHILD AT ANY GOVERNMENT CLINIC OR HOSPITAL, YOU REALLY MUST DO IT. IT WILL PROTECT YOUR BABY AGAINST CHILDHOOD DISEASES, IT’S VERY IMPORTANT, TRY AND SPEAK TO YOUR EMPLOYER I’M SURE THEY WILL UNDERSTAND.

HAIBO, SINDISISE! WHEN AM I GOING TO FIND THE TIME? I WORK ALL WEEK AND ESIDES I CAN’T AFFORD IT.

DID YOU KNOW THAT MANY CHILDREN DIE BEFORE THEY TURN FIVE? THAT’S BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT IMMUNISED.

THAT SOUNDS LIKE AN EVENT FOR SLOW DRIVERS!

WELL, THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH HAS STARTED THIS CAMPAIGN CALLED “PVG 13 CATCH UP DRIVE.”

HA HA HA!

AY WENA, NO, IT’S A FREE ADD-ON IMMUNISATION CALLED PVG13 FOR YOUR CHILD, BUT ALL CHILDREN BETWEEN 18-36 MONTHS MUST BE TAKEN TO CLINICS TO BE IMMUNISED ON TIME. IT’S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A PARENT.

WHAT’S THIS PVG13?

IT PROTECTS CHILDREN AND COMMUNITIES AGAINST DISEASES LIKE, PNEUMONIA, BLOOD INFECTION, MIDDLE EAR INFECTION AND EVEN MENINGITIS.

I’M SO PLEASED WE SPOKE SINDISISE. I WILL TAKE ANDILE TOMORROW TO THE CLINIC AND EXPLAIN TO MY EMPLOYER ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE!

DON’T DELAY, VACCINATE TODAY AND PROTECT YOUR CHILD!
The Department of Health in KZN is one of the most complex and challenging departments in government but, despite this, there is serious commitment to resolving issues of service delivery. To help you better understand the role and responsibilities of patients when visiting a health facility, EZEPMILO spoke to KZN Health Ombudsperson Mboneni Bhekisiwayo about the process involved if you are unhappy with service received at a public health facility in the province.

What is your role in the department?
As the provincial health ombudsperson, I investigate complaints and concerns about service delivery at health facilities in KZN. I then file my report along with recommendations to the Head of Department for her consideration.

What is the complaints process if someone is not happy with health service?
All our health facilities have Public Relations Officers (PROs). These are the first people to know about a complaint because they are at the facility and can respond faster to resolve an issue. Patients and visitors should note names and positions of people they have spoken to, the name of the facility, date of the incident and details of what happened as clearly as possible. If, after complaining to the PRO, you are still not satisfied with the way your concerns have been dealt with by the facility, then you can contact my office directly – details below.

It is a patient’s responsibility to:

- Take care of his or her health
- Care for and protect the environment
- Respect the rights of other patients and health providers
- Utilise the health care system properly and not abuse it
- Know their local health service and what they offer
- Provide health care providers with relevant and accurate information for diagnostic, treatment rehabilitation or counselling purposes.
- Advise health care providers on his or her wishes in the event of death
- Comply with the prescribed treatment
- Enquire about related costs of treatment or arrange for payment
- Take care of health records in their possession

Every patient has a right to:

- A healthy and safe environment
- Participation in decision making
- Access to health care services which include:
  - Receiving timely emergency care
  - Treatment and rehabilitation
  - Provision for special needs
  - Counselling
  - Palliative care
  - A positive disposition
  - Health information
  - Knowledge of one’s own health insurance/medial aid scheme
  - Choice of health services
  - Being treated by a named health care provider
  - Confidentiality and privacy
  - Informed consent
  - Refusal of treatment
  - Second opinion
  - Continuity of care
  - Complain about health services

Got a complaint about Public Health service in KZN? TALK TO US!

LET’S MAKE HEALTH CARE BETTER BY PLAYING A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY!
American Health Team visits Osindisweni Hospital

KZN HEALTH MEC DR SIBONGILE ZUNGU together with MEC Dhlomo welcomed a senior delegation of American officials who paid a visit to the Osindisweni Hospital in northern KwaZulu-Natal earlier this month, as part of their multi-country visit within the SADC region.

Their visit to the hospital follows a partnership between the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health, American International Health Alliance (AIHA) and Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on the Clinical Associates Programme. Officials were taken on a tour of the hospital where they witnessed first-hand the benefits of the partnership and the work being done by Clinical Associates to improve patient care and the quality of healthcare services at public health facilities at Osindisweni Hospital.

The role of Clinical Associates is critical as they play an important role in addressing skills shortages in the public health sector and strengthening the health system. This particular group of health professionals have the necessary knowledge, attitudes and psychomotor skills to be able to work in a hospital environment assisting doctors and other healthcare professionals in conducting procedures and assessing patients, mainly in casualty and emergency wards as well in theatre.

Operation Sukuma Sakhe

AMAJUBA DISTRICT was buzzing with excitement recently as MEC Dhlomo and his team from Operation Sukuma Sakhe visited the area to commemorate the country’s 20 years of democracy. As the flame passed through the district, people began ululating and dancing in celebration of the achievements towards building a better life for all South Africans. The team were taken on a tour of some of the area’s progress, which included open air park gyms in Charlestown and Newcastle to encourage children to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

MEC DISCUSSES NHI WITH TRADITIONAL LEADERS

KZN HEALTH MEC DR SIBONGISEN DHLOMO and Traditional Leaders in the uMgungundlovu Council came together to discuss the country’s new National Health Insurance plan which will be phased in over the next 13 years. The verdict was that the pilot phase is proving to be successful so far, including the uMgungundlovu district where MEC Dhlomo opened a number of clinics in the Mpendle area.

Addressing traditional leaders about pregnancy levels in the area, MEC Dhlomo said: “I am very saddened by the increasing number of girls younger than 18 that come to the antenatal clinics. If this goes on we will never win our fight to eradicate AIDS as it shows that our children are not using condoms,” said the MEC.

Under the pilot phase, Mpendle has benefitted as follows:

- Establishment of three clinics in the area
- A new mobile clinic to cover 23 areas out of reach of fixed clinics
- A School Health Team visiting nine quantile one schools and 31 quantile two schools
- A Family Health Team including 28 Health Workers and 3 Supervisors which will visit 2274 homes with a second team visiting 260 homes.
YOUR GUIDE TO GOOD HEALTH FOR EVERY STAGE OF YOUR LIFE

To help you get started we’ve put together the following guide so that you know what check-ups you need at every stage of your life:

**YOUTH 14-19**

As your body develops and you start experiencing hormonal changes, sexual health becomes a key area of attention. But there are other aspects of health you need to watch out for to avoid bigger problems later on in life. These include:

- **Drugs, sex, missing school and running away from home can be SIGNS OF DEPRESSION.** Clinic staff can help - parents should not ignore the signs. Speak to your local health worker or church leader who can step in.
- **Say NO to sex before marriage, get information on the dangers of UNPLANNED PREGNANCY, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and contraception - education is the key to your future!**
- **CIRCUMCISION** is key to reducing the spread of HIV and other sexual infections. Know where to go and make sure your circumcision is done by a medically trained professional. Ask your local clinic to refer you to one.
- **Signs banning swimming because of BILHARZIA and WORMS must be obeyed.** Check your stools for worms if you have stomach pain or blood in the urine.
- **EYE AND HEARING PROBLEMS** can make it hard to keep up at school. Get tested at your local clinic.

**YOUNG ADULTS 20+**

Finding and treating diseases early can save your life. If you are HIV-positive, you can be symptom-free for many years by living a healthy lifestyle, and antiretroviral drugs will improve your quality of life. Be responsible with your health by:

- **If you have unsafe sex, GET TESTED FOR HIV every six months.**
- **CONDOMS PREVENT MANY STIS.** Sexually transmitted infections often have no symptoms, so never think it is safe to have unprotected sex. Get tested.
- **Being overweight can lead to diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.** EAT HEALTHILY, including plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, less red meat and more chicken. Avoid processed foods like white bread, deep friend fatty meals and foods high in sugar and fat.

**ADULTS 30-49**

The risk of cancer increases after age 40. Women must check their breasts for lumps and changes in nipple shape; men should examine their testicles for lumps.

- **EXERCISE** - run or walk at a fast pace regularly – don’t fool yourself, being overweight can kill you!
- **EYESIGHT** weakens from age 40, but can be slowed. Get tested every two years. Double vision can be a sign of diabetes and high blood pressure.
- **YOUR PERIODS** start changing between 40 and 55, becoming less regular and either heavier or lighter. This can last many years before stopping completely (this is called menopause). Speak to your local health worker about this.
- **BLOOD PRESSURE** increases in your 40s. It can cause heart disease and stroke if it is not treated. Have tests every year and, if you do have high blood pressure, take the prescribed pills every day.

**IN YOUR 50s**

A healthy lifestyle can add 11 to 12 years to your life, even if you only start in your 50s or later – it’s NEVER too late to live a healthy life! But tests are still important.

- **Check for CANCER OF THE BOWEL from age 50.**
- **Men should get tested for PROSTATE CANCER** at this time. Early detection leads to better treatment.
- **Women over 60 should have their bone strength checked.** The risk of OSTEOPOROSIS (where your bones become weak and brittle) is higher after menopause. You may need to take a calcium supplement or drink more milk and maas.
- **Have your eyes checked for GLAUCOMA AND CATARACTS every year.**
- **Test your HEARING** at your local clinic or ask when the mobile eye clinic will be in your area.

**Your Family Health History** and get tested if possible, as some illnesses are passed on!
April is HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH, but the following days are especially important to remember:

**World Haemophilia Day (17 April)**
Haemophilia is a lifelong bleeding disorder affecting men. It causes dangerous bleeding inside the body, the joints and the muscles. Although not curable, it can be managed through proper treatment.

**African Malaria Day (29 April)**
Malaria is under control in South Africa, but we still need to be aware of mosquito bites which cause malaria. The aim is to work towards zero malaria deaths by 2015. Do your bit and make sure you keep mosquitos away from your family.

**National Polio and Measles Immunisation Campaign (29 April – 17 May)**
Each year in April the Department of Health launches an annual campaign to give polio and measles the final push – part of a national drive to ensure children under 5 years are vaccinated against these diseases. The additional aim is to help the country achieve the Millennium Development Goal No. 4 of reducing childhood mortality by two thirds by 2015. Do your part and make sure you find out where and when your child will receive his or her free immunisation in your area.

**Immunise your child. It’s safe. It’s free. It’s effective!**

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World Health Day
Every one of us is responsible for our own health. While hospitals, clinics, doctors, and nurses are there for treatment and advice, we must take control of our bodies. If we don’t take our medicines correctly and don’t care about what we eat, our body will not take care of us. It’s time to realise that health care begins with us. Exercise, eating healthily and avoiding foods that kill us is an investment in your health.

IT’S NEVER TOO LATE TO START!

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African Vaccination Week
Did you know that vaccination is one of the best ways to protect your child against childhood diseases? This week is used to encourage all mothers to vaccinate their children against diseases which can kill. Vaccines are safe and free, so ask your local clinic about getting your child protected today!