

HEALTH MATTERS **FREE** Ezempilo

EDUCATE || INFORM || EMPOWER EDITION 12



*“We are normal.
We have hands. We
have feet. We can
walk, we can talk, we
have needs just like
everyone else. Don’t
be afraid of us. We
are all the same!”*

**NKOSI JOHNSON
1989-2001**

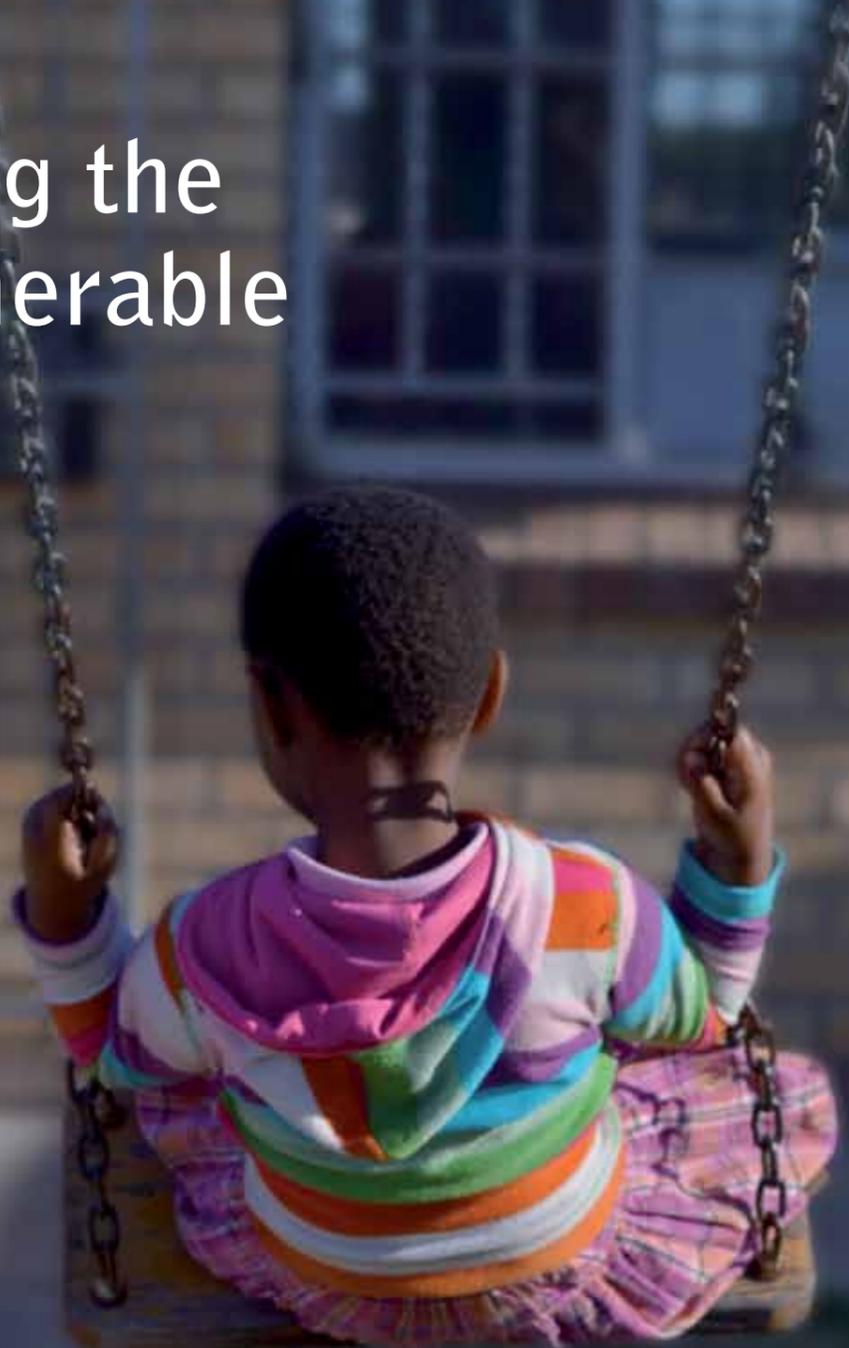


health

Department:
Health
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL



Protecting the most vulnerable



Violence can be physical, sexual or emotional. It can happen anywhere – in the home, the workplace, the school or the community. Perpetrators can be strangers, or they can be people whom the victim knows – family members or friends.

Children and women are the most common victims of violence because in many societies they have a lower social status and less power.

Violence is a crime. If you, a friend or anyone you know is experiencing violence speak out.

South African Police Service: 08600 10 111

There is also a special helpline for women victims.

Stop Gender Violence Helpline: 0800 150 150

www.unicef.org/southafrica
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unicef 
unite for children

Message from...



Message from KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo

Addressing the 5th South African AIDS Conference in Durban earlier this year, former Chief Justice Sandile Ngcobo said “THE PROBLEM IS US.”

As we end the year and usher in a new one, I find his words very relevant in the issues that I would like us all to think about as we prepare for the festive season.

Firstly I would like us to remember that the Theme of the World AIDS Day this year is about “Getting to Zero.” Zero New HIV Infections; Zero Discrimination and Zero AIDS Related Deaths.

It is very significant that this theme of “Getting to Zero” runs up until 2015 as this is the year in which all countries, including ours, will be reporting on progress made in meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

Our initiatives on HIV AND AIDS, TB and sexually transmitted infections (STI) programmes are mainly guided by the Presidential announcement on the 2009 World AIDS Day where he declared:

- We are launching a massive campaign to mobilise all South Africans to get tested for HIV.
- All children under one year of age will get treatment if they test positive.
- All patients with both TB and HIV will get treatment with anti-retroviral if their CD4 count is 350 or less.
- TB and HIV/AIDS will now be treated under one roof.
- All pregnant HIV positive women with a CD4 count of 350 or with symptoms regardless of CD4 count will have access to treatment.
- All other pregnant women not falling into this category, but who are HIV positive, will be put on treatment at fourteen weeks of pregnancy to protect the baby.

All these initiatives are aimed at totally eradicating the transmission of mother to child of HIV. In this regard, I must commend our womenfolk for the great strides that have been achieved, especially considering that in 2008, transmission was at a staggering 21% and this year it has been brought down to below 3%!

With all the assistance on offer we have no choice but to agree with Chief Justice Sandile Ngcobo as he says, “the problem is no longer the virus; the problem is us.”

We need to collectively fight stigma; exclusion; discrimination and violence for those who are infected or affected.

We also need to ensure that all those that test negative remain so.

Let 2012 be the year in which we live up to our Honourable Premier, Dr Zweli Mkhize’s expectations when he says:

“If South Africa is to achieve the goal of ‘A South Africa that is free of Tuberculosis, HIV and the stigma surrounding the diseases’, KwaZulu-Natal has to lead such a change”.

I wish you all a long and healthy life and a safe festive season!

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With thanks from the following contributors:

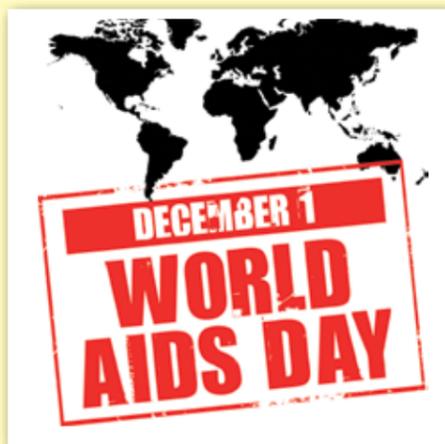
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Your suggestions and comments are welcome, and if you have been impressed by a health worker who provided an outstanding service, let us know and we will feature them! Contact us on 031 562 9803, editor@ezempilohealthmatters.co.za or write to us on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

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KZN IS WINNING

Let's Keep Up The Circumcision!

Well done! Men in this province are heeding the call to get circumcised, and results are continuing to prove that this is the way to go in reducing the risk of spreading HIV and Aids.

Still in Doubt? Listen to Siyabonga...

Siyabonga Mchunu is a 25-year old who was recently circumcised at a local clinic. He says he got circumcised after reading about the health benefits. "I did not do it because everyone was doing it or because it is part of my culture and so on, but for my own health. I got more information about the benefits of being circumcised from professional health workers and it made sense to me. 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 says with a confident smile.

As Siyabonga mentioned, male circumcision has many benefits including:

- It reduces the risk of HIV/Aids transmission by about 60%
- It reduces transmission of sexually transmitted diseases
- It can help reduce the risk of bladder

and prostate problems at an older age

It helps reduce the chances of penis cancer

It helps to reduce the risk of cervix cancer by about 20% because the virus lives 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 only 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.

VISIT YOUR LOCAL CLINIC AND SPEAK TO THEM ABOUT FREE, SAFE CIRCUMCISION – REDUCE THE SPREAD OF HIV AND BE WISE, GET CIRCUMCISED!



THIS HOLIDAY, STAY ALIVE! DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE!



Good Friends Don't Let Good Friends Drink and Drive!



GETTING TO ZERO NEW HIV INFECTIONS

Let's face it. We hear about AIDS so much, that most of us simply stop reading about it. But that doesn't make the problem go away – in fact all we are doing is ignoring the problem. So let's take a fresh look at HIV and AIDS and own it, instead of letting it own us...

ARE WE WINNING?

We've come a long way, thanks to all of us becoming more sexually responsible, getting tested for HIV, using condoms and the department's efforts to making sure that more people have access to anti-retroviral treatment (ART). However, despite

all our efforts in reducing the spread, more people are still DYING of AIDS related diseases – this means that while there are fewer incidents of HIV, it continues to kill more people who are infected. The solution is simple. We MUST make sure that we PREVENT the spread, so that we can reduce the number of people dying as a result.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO REDUCE THE SPREAD OF HIV/AIDS

All males between the ages of 15 and 49 should get circumcised.

This reduces the spread of HIV and sexually transmitted infections – remember, it reduces, not prevents,

so condoms must still be used! Having sex without a condom is not a sign of being a 'real' man – a 'real' man is a responsible man who considers the health of himself and his partner, if there is a risk of a sexual infection or HIV.

Pregnant women should report early at the clinic

All pregnant women that are HIV positive or those who have TB will receive ARV treatment from 14 weeks. It is still possible to give birth to an HIV free baby even if the mother is HIV positive, through early booking at the clinic. Prevention is cure, so book early!

Challenging our cultural practices about polygamy

It is important that we respect our culture and this means respecting polygamy as part of it. But this does not have to mean risking the health of everyone involved through reckless behaviour. If your man is going to sleep with more than one partner, a woman has a right to insist that he wears a condom during sex, and that they both get tested for AIDS and sexually transmitted infections. That way, everyone involved in the polygamous relationship is protected from reckless sexual behavior – it's your right.

TRUCKERS! TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR HEALTH ON THE ROADS!

KZN has seven truck stop clinics in the province, based in the following areas: Marian Hill and Cato Ridge, Marburg in UGU, Pongola in Zululand, Mooi River in Umgungundlovu, Kokstad in Sisonke and Tugela in Uthukela. These have been set up for truckers as they are especially at risk of contracting and spreading infectious diseases. It is a reality of their jobs that they often feel lonely

on the road and may engage in sex with strangers – and with this, comes the risk of contracting a disease. For this reason, the truck clinics have been set up to assist truckers with the following services, which they are encouraged to make use of:

- HIV Counselling and Testing (HCT)
- Medication for their chronic illnesses
- Male and female condoms
- Advice on family planning
- Protein porridge for HIV+ clients
- Referrals to hospital or a doctor if necessary
- Awareness and testing on sexually transmitted diseases.

BREAK THE SILENCE!

Despite government's efforts, our biggest problem is that we are all still too scared to talk about AIDS. It's time to be honest, to educate and let everyone know that people with HIV and AIDS do not need to be avoided – you cannot get AIDS from just touching someone with the infection, and you cannot be cured of AIDS from sleeping with a virgin either!

GET TESTED

It's the ONLY way to know for sure. Getting tested means taking ownership of your health and doing something about it – the sooner, the better. If you are infected, it's better to know so you that you can be extra careful with what you eat and your sexual behaviour. If you're not, at least you will know the result and can work towards future prevention.

There can be no discrimination against anyone who has HIV and AIDS.

They have the right to medical treatment and care from our health and welfare services.

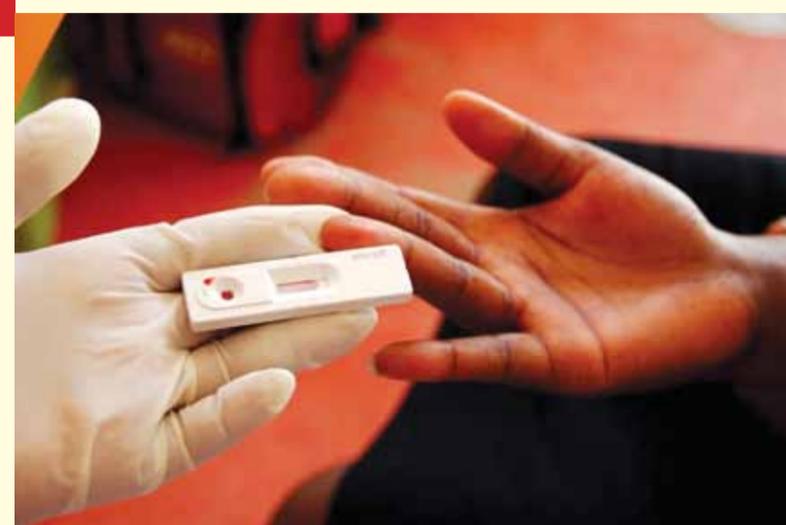
Children with HIV are allowed to attend any school.

No one can be fired from a job just because they are HIV positive.

No one can be forced to have an HIV test at work or before getting a job.

Test results cannot be shown to anyone else without permission.

Pregnant women with HIV have the right to make a choice about their pregnancy.



If you have any questions about HIV/AIDS you can phone the free 24-hour AIDS Helpline at 0800-012-322



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Photograph - Grant Erskine - Independent Newspapers.

WORLD AIDS DAY

When a mother loses a child...

Nkosi Johnson was only twelve years old when his frail body gave in to AIDS and he passed away – ironically, on International Children’s Day. He became the symbol of the fight against AIDS. Now, ten years after his death, his foster mother Gail Johnson writes about his passing.

To lose a child is to lose part of your future. You lose the hopes and dreams you’ve had for them. You lose the chance of having grandchildren and the joy they bring. A vacuum is left in your life that can never be filled.

Our children are supposed to bury us as parents but sadly AIDS has reversed that, and we are burying our children.

Nkosi was my foster son. I met him in 1991 and in 1992; he became my ‘son’ when his mother Daphne gave me the privilege of caring for him. I knew that Nkosi was infected from the day I met him, I knew too that one day we would lose him and would have to say goodbye. A part of us went with him the day he died.

There was no ARV rollout in 2001 and we could not afford those that were available privately. So I ask myself: why, when we now have life-saving drugs available, are we still losing so

many people to AIDS? Why are we still in denial and fear about knowing our status when HIV/AIDS is now a chronic but manageable disease? Why are we still burying our children?

In 2010, when we hosted the World Cup, South Africans stood as one

“Our children are supposed to bury us as parents but sadly AIDS has reversed that, and we are burying our children.”

and we showed the world we could ‘do it’. So I ask: why, in 2011, are we not standing as one and facing the challenge of the havoc that this pandemic is wreaking upon our nation?

AIDS is with us daily, yet it seems that we are ‘bored’ with it, that the sense of urgency is no longer with us - but children are orphaned and buried daily. Why are people leaving it too

late to have their status confirmed, why are we still hiding behind “it will never happen to me”?

ARVs ensure a long and healthy life; a commitment made by our Government to ensure that HIV/AIDS is a chronic manageable disease – however, that becomes a two-way street. We have to honour that commitment by committing to our health. By working with our angry teens that have been infected from birth, by ensuring that they do not default, and know that through these life-giving medications, the sky is the limit.

Nkosi passed away on 1st June 2001 – International Children’s Day. Nkosi had run a good race and achieved more in his short life than many of us do in a lifetime. He chose the 1st June to pass the baton of life to us. Let’s not let his legacy down – we must renew our fight against AIDS, together.



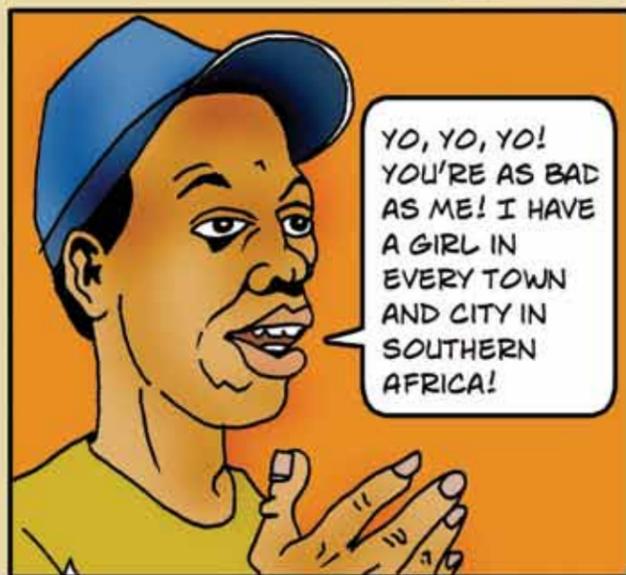
Trusted Dryness

Keep your baby dry with Huggies® Dry Comfort's new LockDry* system, available in a convenient 3 pack!

HUGGIES®
Disposable Nappies
Dry Comfort®

love the joyride

TRUCKERS: TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR SEXUAL HEALTH



WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR TRUCKS ON THE ROAD, SO LET US ALSO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR LIVES ON THE ROAD!



CLIMATE CHANGE, GLOBAL WARMING, WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL – WHO CARES? YOU SHOULD!

It's the poor who suffer the most from weather disasters like floods and droughts.

More than 40,000 decision makers and academics from countries around the world met in Durban this month, to discuss the changing weather and how it affects us on earth in a meeting called Conference of Parties (COP17). For most of us that live from day to day, just to put food on the table, this may seem unimportant – and the least of our concerns.

However, let's try to understand what the fuss is all about, so that we can understand how our actions affect what the environment gives back to us for survival and our health.

Understanding how our actions affect the environment

In the past few years, some of

the worst ever weather disasters have killed thousands, left millions homeless and destroyed roads, rail lines – even nuclear power stations. In South Africa heavy rains and flooding continue to destroy farmlands, crops, homes and livestock. As a result

“The reality is that in the last 200 years we have used nearly all the earth's coal, oil and gas. There will soon be nothing left for the future generation – and that is the reality.”

thousands of seasonal farm-workers also lose their jobs and suffer the effects of the increase in food prices. Fishermen are catching fewer fish because of over-fishing, pollution and changing sea temperatures. In KwaZulu-Natal, severe storms have destroyed rural communities

and left many homeless. Coffee, fruit and vegetable crops are failing throughout Africa due to the unusual weather patterns confusing farmers about when and where to plant their seeds.

Coal, oil and natural gas are used every day. These resources provide the energy for lighting, warming and cooking in our homes, to keep factories working and to fuel cars, trucks, planes, trains and ships. Nearly all our oil is imported, at a very high cost, while our coal is used in power stations to give our country electricity.

The reality is that in the last 200 years we have used nearly all the earth's coal, oil and gas. There will soon be nothing left for the future generation – and that is the reality.

What is causing so many floods?

Scientists say it's because of global warming – which means the temperature on earth is rising, mostly because of car exhaust fumes and pollution from burning things like coal. These produce gases (called “greenhouse gases”), which rises into the sky. There is so much greenhouse gas now that it is trapping earth's heat. As this heat builds up, the weather patterns change. Seasons get longer or shorter, areas near the sea are flooded and there are more violent storms and lightning.

Why our government is acting on climate change – and why we should too!

The only way we can get more out of our earth is to make sure we protect it from damage and destruction. While power stations and industry are the biggest polluters of air and water, most of the poor use low grade, cheap

coal for fires and cut down trees for firewood and cooking. Our rivers and dams are often polluted by washing and toilet activities. Goats and over-grazing cause soil destruction which adds to South Africa's water shortage and destroys crop lands.

It is the job of governments to carefully balance development using our earth's natural resources, in a way that doesn't destroy them. Some people already believe that the earth cannot feed the extra people expected to inhabit it in 2030 – nearly 9 billion people – and that many will starve to death.

What can we do to prevent this?

We all need to change the way we live on and treat our land. While world leaders meet and sign documents, we are all responsible for how we treat the environment if we want future generations to benefit from what we leave behind – otherwise

they will suffer from our actions. Here are some things you can do to cut down on pollution, use less energy – and save money:

Practice the three 'Rs': reduce, reuse and recycle.

Buy goods with little packaging. Buy re-usable items, not disposables. Buy fruit and vegetables in season and those that are grown near you (better still, plant your own vegetables – it's cheaper and healthier!). Reduce waste and recycle paper, plastic, aluminium cans, newspapers and glass. Re-use kitchen water in your vegetable garden.

Plant a tree.

Trees and other plants create more oxygen. There are not enough trees left on earth for all of us in this world, so let's plant where we can!

Educate others about protecting our environment! Make it a community project!

Share information about recycling and energy saving with your friends, family, church and others in the community. Encourage ward councillors and others to establish programmes that will protect the environment.

Use energy efficient light bulbs to save on electricity.

They last longer and use less energy. Switch off lights when you leave a room.



Our health depends on the health of the environment - We have only one earth, let's protect it, and not destroy it!



Fighting Disease, Fighting Poverty, Giving Hope

Fighting Disease, Fighting Poverty, Giving Hope

‘WE’RE READY FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON’ SAYS NKATEKO SITHOLE, GENERAL MANAGER: KZN HEALTH EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

KZN Health is ready for that time of the year when our Emergency Medical Services are pushed to the limit, due to festive drinking, an increase in domestic violence and an increase in the number of visitors entering the country from other provinces and international borders. We have noticed an increase in traffic on all the major routes in KZN, especially the two national roads, the N2 from Eastern Cape boarder along the coast through to Mpumalanga and the N3 from Free State border to Ethekwini. With our warm weather, people come from all over to celebrate in our province, and so our roads and beaches are often busiest at this time of the year, placing a greater strain on our services.

KZN Health prepares a plan well in advance to cope with the extra pressure over this time to make sure we are able to provide a quick and effective response to all incidents within the province and its immediate borders. During the festive period we also set up specific points until January 12 which are visible to the public so that you know we are on hand should you require our medical service in an emergency situation.

While we are all in a celebratory mood, please bear in mind that for many families this can turn into a devastating time with accidents on the road – which can be prevented. We need to work together to ensure that we follow safety rules on the roads.

Drivers must make sure that they are well rested and make regular stops to cope with becoming tired and sleepy while driving. Wear seatbelts at all times and most importantly, make sure that infants and toddlers are strapped properly into their appropriate seats. When swimming in the ocean, please make sure that parental supervision is always around and that you swim in groups in the specific areas set out by the lifeguards. Always follow the instructions given by lifeguards; they are well aware of the dangers of swimming in the ocean and are there to protect you and your family.

While the country is winding down to celebrate the festivities of this joyous season, KZN Health, in particular EMRS, is gearing up for a trying and busy period ahead and focus on providing continuous, efficient service. Let’s work together to keep the roads safe!

DURING THE OPENING OF KWAMASHU COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE BY THE MEC FOR HEALTH IN KWAZULU-NATAL DR SIBONGISENI DHLOMO AT KWAMASHU. PIC: THEMBA MNGOMEZULU.



OUR NURSES SCOOP NATIONAL AWARDS!

It was a proud moment for KZN, especially for our Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo who was present when KZN health staff and facilities received awards of excellence at the National Department of Health Excellence Awards ceremony in Gauteng last month.

“From the perspective of the health worker, this is a very important occasion and I would like to add my congratulations to the thousands of healthcare workers who were awarded,” said Dr Dhlomo MEC.

The Cecilia Makiwane Award, which is the country’s highest order in the nursing profession, was awarded to Ms Sisana Cebekhulu from UMkhanyakude District (Ntshongwe clinic) to the applause of KZN Health at the function.

Last year the award was received by another KZN Health worker - Ms Joyce Zitha, from Umzinto Fixed Clinic while the runner-up was Ms

NE Mngomezulu, a nurse from Bethesda hospital. The Marilyn Lehana award was bestowed on Ms Zanele Mthiyane from uMgungundlovu (Taylor’s Halt clinic).

The Health Excellence Awards was developed almost 10 years ago to recognise and reward health professionals who demonstrate excellence beyond the requirements of their positions and who add value to their profession and workplace.

Bestowing the awards to excelling health practitioners from across the country Health Deputy Minister, Dr Gwendoline Ramokgopa, said; “Another fundamental part of our efforts to re-structure our health system is to move away from a costly and ineffective curative or hospital-based system towards one that implements the primary healthcare approach through making sure that prevention of illness and promotion of wellness become our

focus. This is also a cornerstone of the proposed NHI approach.”

Two Kwazulu-Natal public health facilities received awards for Most Clean Hospital in the country, which was bestowed to Eshowe Hospital, while RK Khan Hospital received an award for being the best hospital to have sufficient stock of drugs.

“It is worth noting that this award is coming to this province for the second successive time and to the same district, UMkhanyakude. We hope it will be received as a challenge to all other districts in the province and to nurses in general to work harder in the spirit of continuous quality improvement. We also believe it is indeed a confidence booster to our efforts as a province,” said MEC Dhlomo.

Well done, KZN – let’s aim higher each year!

KZN HEALTH



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NEWS

Fighting Disease, Fighting Poverty, Giving Hope



NURSING OUR FACILITIES BACK TO LIFE...

THE MEC FOR HEALTH IN KWAZULU-NATAL DR SIBONGISENI DHLOMO AND THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN KWAZULU-NATAL DR SIBONGILE ZUNGU DURING THE OPENING OF KWAMASHU COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE. PIC: THEMBA MNGOMEZULU.

There is no doubt about it. South Africa is on the move towards a new health plan that will serve all South Africans. To ensure that our province is ready, KZN Health has already started upgrading and rebuilding health facilities throughout KZN. Addressing reporters alongside MEC Dhlomo at the opening of the KwaMashu Community Health Centre, KZN Health HOD Dr. Sibongile Zungu said that there would be a drive to recruit more doctors, and train more nurses, community care givers and other health workers in order to ensure that health facilities can cope with the demand once the new National Health Insurance (NHI) plan is implemented over the next 14 years.

“Around 550 projects have been completed since 2009, and we have already begun the turn-around strategy for all our health facilities in the province,” says Dr.Zungu. Some of the new projects include:

DR. PIXLEY KA SEME MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

THIS WILL BE TURNED INTO A REGIONAL HOSPITAL IN ORDER TO

EASE THE BURDEN OF DEMAND ON MAHATMA GHANDI HOSPITAL.

KING EDWARD HOSPITAL

- Upgrading of the ARV clinic
- Construction of paediatric ward
- Repair, unblocking and upgrading of storm water drains
- Theatre block to be converted into ICU
- Upgrade of nurses' residence

KING GEORGE V HOSPITAL

- New TB ward, reduction in waiting period
- Construction of a new Level 1 hospital to relieve the pressure on other hospitals

NGWELEZANA HOSPITAL

- Construction of 72-bed ward in process
- Trauma and Casualty ward completed
- Theatre upgrade

LOWER UMFOLOZI

Construction is in progress to ensure that this hospital (which used to serve only whites) caters for all people in the region, with a strong emphasis on handling maternal health.

ST. APPOLINARIS HOSPITAL

New residences are being built for doctors and nurses who work there, so that they are encouraged to serve the needs of the rural poor that are served by the hospital.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES COMPLETED

Sgweje Clinic, St. Chad CHC (addresses most HIV cases in the district), Mumbé Clinic (serves an area hit hard by MDR TB cases), KwaMashu CHC (this will focus largely on improving the health of mothers and babies in the area).

MORE GOOD NEWS!

MEC Dr. Dhlomo has also announced recently that work will finally begin on KZN Children's Hospital (formerly known as Addington Children's Hospital).

“The KZN Department of Health will kick-start the rebuilding next month, which will see the hospital transformed into a top children's hospital in the country. It will focus on offering a specialised treatment for the children in our province that is not found in most hospitals.” – Dr. Dhlomo.



The festive season is a time for fun. But for many it also brings more problems than happiness. It is also the time of year when there are more suicides, more deaths on our road and more domestic violence. Most of the time it comes down to drinking too much alcohol. We often think we can handle the drink, until it's too late – like the story of Sbali.

“I grew up in a Christian environment with strong values of culture and religion, but drinking was allowed during celebrations and ceremonies. That's when I first tasted beer. There is this belief in my culture that when young boys are allowed to taste alcohol at an early age they will not become drunks when they grow up. As time went on I began to drink more until unfortunately I became drunk and could not control my limits. I used to do quite well at school but my grades dropped and I failed to fulfil my dream of going to medical school.”

IT'S
HOLIDAY
TIME!
LET'S KEEP
OUR PROVINCE
SAFE!

While drinking contributes to the increase in domestic violence, many women are also raped, by men they know and trust, during the festive period. It's important to get to the nearest police station or district hospital as soon as possible if this happens.

Acts of violence, too much drinking and reckless driving places a huge burden on our resources especially at this time of the year, and we should remember that most of these incidents can be avoided! Already the South African Blood Service is facing a critical shortage of blood – with less than 2 days' supply left. Let's be

responsible and arrive alive, keeping each other safe at home and on the roads.

We have the power within us to be the best country we can be, let's make it happen!

December: Awareness Days



Prevention of Injuries Month

Did you know that there are four times more injuries from burns in South Africa than in any other industrialised country in the world?

While we focus on how to avoid injuries during this month's theme, we should also be aware of the serious effects of burns. More than 80% of serious burns happen in mainly informal settlements, and

we can change this with simple prevention. This includes making sure that children do not get close to a burning stove, fire or candle. Most deaths from burns are mainly in the 0-14 year age group, while people with the highest injuries are mainly over 55 years. Speak to your local clinic or council about safer cooking methods and they will advise you on how to reduce fires at home. Teach others in the community and let's save more lives!

1: World Aids Day

It's been ten years since the death of young Nkosi Johnson, who was then the longest surviving child born with HIV. There have been many more survivors since then, and during AIDS awareness month, we pay tribute to those who lost their lives in the battle and those who continue to survive. We are the new generation of hope, and can raise a new AIDS-free generation. Education is the power we can use to change the world; let's begin with our country.

3: International Day of Disabled Persons

This day is aimed at raising awareness of the rights of people with disabilities. They are often isolated in society and this day is a reminder that they still have a role and contribution to make and simply want the chance to prove themselves – not handouts.

5: International Volunteers Day

This day is recognised around the world as a tribute to those who give their time, skills and care to others freely. Imagine if we all did this in our communities? Lending a helping hand to those in need, sharing and giving freely of what we have. Let's bring ubuntu back!

9: World Patient Safety Day

The World Health Organisation launched this annual day to ensure that people understand their right to safe care in hospitals everywhere. As a patient, your rights are protected both in the constitution and the Patient Health Charter. At the same time, we also need to remember that patients also have responsibilities towards their health and the way they treat health workers – it's a partnership.

10: International Human Rights Day

This is an international day to honour the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In South Africa, Human Rights Day is celebrated on 21 March in remembrance of the Sharpeville massacre. Take a few minutes to talk to your children about the importance of this day, and what they can do to value their rights and freedoms, which many South Africans fought and died for.

DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH:

Being Disabled Does Not Mean Being Less Normal



Nontobeko Shezi had polio as a child and was left paralysed because she did not get immunised against the crippling disease. Today she is shunned by her family as a result of her condition, and says she is forced to spend most of her time begging on the streets to feed herself. "I have no other way to survive because I cannot find work and cannot afford a wheel chair. Even though I went to school and I can read and write, people don't want to employ me because they think just because I can't walk I'm stupid too," she says, adding "I wish society can just accept that disability is a fact of life and know that we are people with feelings. We need equal opportunities to do things for ourselves not society's sympathy or handouts."

There are many other people with disabilities in our country, and they also feel as though society has forgotten about them. The reality is that a disabled person can live a productive life, and can contribute

to the workforce. However, they do need our support and understanding in some of the challenges they may face every day. Having a disability does not mean you cannot do what an abled person can do – it simply means you do it differently.

During this month, people around the world are made aware of disability, and in South Africa specifically: the

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rights of disabled people. Like the law protects everyone else, it also protects the disabled.

Including:

- The right not be discriminated against
- The right to self-representation
- Access all health and

rehabilitation

- Access to education
- Access to housing
- Access to transport
- Access to a suitably built environment

People with disabilities have equal access to all medical facilities and can also access a disability grant. This covers the basic needs of disabled adults over 18 years who are unfit to work due to a mental or physical disability.

The grant is for people who are not able to work and would not have refused treatment. The disability must be confirmed by a valid medical report of a medical officer stating whether the disability is temporary or permanent. Those who fit this description can visit their nearest social security centers or speak to a local clinic for assistance.

Through the keyhole:

Nursing Manager, Joyce Vezi

'Nurses should not go into the job for money – it's about caring for the sick'.



These wise words are from 60-year-old Nurse Tutor Joyce Vezi, who works at St Mary's KwaMagwaza hospital in Zululand. It's not many people who become inspired to offer their patients better service after experiencing bad health care at a private hospital, after all, we are mostly led to believe that private care is best. However, ironically that's what inspired Joyce.

"After I fell sick I was admitted to a private hospital, where I laid for days in the ward unable to help myself and was very neglected by the staff there. During that period I imagined how our patients felt when they come to our hospital and they don't get good service. I asked myself, is this the way that we should treat the sick and vulnerable in our society?" she says.

That experience, adds Joyce, made her realize they need to do better at caring for the sick at hospitals, and so after more than 20 years as a nurse, she now works as a Nursing

Manager so that nurses can be reminded that they need to be passionate about their job, and not simply get into the profession for money.

The hard working mother of four was born in a struggling family, with her father working as a shoe maker. At 17, she dropped out of school as her parents could no longer afford to further her education and she joined her mother as a domestic worker at a girls' school. Despite earning very little money, Joyce paid for her studies in nursing because she wanted to better herself

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doing something to help others – especially the sick and vulnerable.

"I worked the whole day, until 9 o'clock at night, then I would go to school after work. Life was difficult but I was determined to make a difference in my family," she said.

The young mother of two studied nursing at Ceza hospital and in 1978 enrolled for a Midwifery Diploma at McCord hospital where she worked for eleven years. This is where she studied to obtain her nursing degree and thereafter moved to KwaMagwaza in 1994, where she took up her current post. Her hard work paid off – she has held not one, but two posts as acting Hospital Manager.

Her amazing journey and deeply religious beliefs have also influenced her two children to become nurses, as well as her granddaughter who is studying medicine.

An inspiration to everyone, proving that anything is possible if you have the dedication and will to achieve it – thank you Joyce for making a difference to nursing!