

Media Release

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SHORTAGE OF MEDICAL OFFICERS A CRISIS IN RURAL PUBLIC HOSPITALS

The MEC for Health in KwaZulu-Natal; Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, together with a team of medical doctors are volunteering their services at one rural hospital in Creighton, St Appolinaris Hospital, where the shortage of doctors is affected by the rural environment.

The rural terrain of the province together with the migration of health workers affects the public service in one way or another. In most cases, health workers choose not to work in the rural areas of the province due the lack of infrastructure such as banks, shopping malls and road infrastructure. Many doctors, in particular, cannot leave their home cities looking for better working conditions and career opportunities thus choose to go abroad or 'starve' the rural communities of this important health care resource.

"We have advertised close to seven posts for medical doctors in that hospital (St Appolinaris) but when or if people come for interviews they never come back. When I heard that the only three permanent staff members could not have a holiday, I asked some of my colleague clinicians to accompany me to provide a service to the people of Creighton. I really wish that people could understand and work with us in getting people committed to serving the underserved" says the MEC for Health, Dr Dhlomo.

The Department allocates millions towards the provision of bursaries for young people to study towards health related professions. In the last financial year the department spent R48 million towards bursaries and this amount may increase in this financial year.

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH: KWAZULU-NATAL