MMC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE OFFICIALLY OPENED

It was a historic occasion when His Majesty the King Zwelithini Goodwill ka-Bhekuzulu officially opened the Male Medical Circumcision Centre of Excellence at Northdale Hospital on the 16th of May 2013. The event, attended by over 2000 males who have already undergone the procedure, also drew a number of high profile dignitaries from a number of sectors such as political leadership, traditional leadership, partners working with the department in the MMC programme, and also structures who are participating in the fight against the spread of HIV and Aids. Among those were also the Premier of KZN Dr Zweli Mkhize and the MEC for Health Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo accompanied by the HOD for Health Dr S Zungu.

Following a call in 2009 from His Majesty the King, the Provincial Government through the Department of Health embarked on a drive to promote and strengthen Medical Male Circumcision (MMC) in the Province. Since the commencement of medical male circumcision in 2010, 239 605 males have been circumcised and on an ongoing basis various strategies and programmes are put in place by the Department with an aim of strengthening the medical male circumcision programme and to assist in the scale up of medical male circumcisions.

Several studies have shown that medical male circumcision reduces chances of acquiring HIV by circumcised males engaging in heterosexual sexual intercourse by approximately 60%. The procedure is also noted to have benefits of keeping the male genital organs in a good hygienic state, reducing the chances of penile cancer and reducing the chances of the transmission of human papilloma virus which may lead to cervical cancer in the female partner. In an effort to promote and strengthen the MMC programme in the Province, in 2010 the Department established the KwaZulu-Natal Medical Male Circumcision Centre of Excellence. Over the years, the Department has been hard at work to make sure that the MMC Centre of Excellence becomes a highly reputable institution capable of providing undisputable high quality services, particularly in the area of training and surgery.

To date, this Centre has trained a total of 555 health care practitioners (including nurses, doctors, other health care practitioners and traditional surgeons) from all over the Province; giving them tuition and practical teaching on the MMC methods i.e. Tara Klamp, Forceps Guided, Dora-Slits and Sleeve Resection.

The occasion took a traditional format, with Amabutho from different districts within the province, in their traditional garb, entertaining the crowds with traditional dance and singing of amahubo prior to the arrival of Isilo and his entourage. According to the order of proceedings, Ubhejanuphumesiqwini was to arrive and be briefed at a separate venue, before proceeding to the Centre to unveil the plaque and cut the ribbon to officially open the Centre. This was followed by an inspection of the facility.

During the formal programme, the MEC for Health Dr S Dhlomo gave a brief address about the success the MMC programme has had and introduced the Premier of the province Dr Z Mkhize. Dr Mkhize presented the Second Provincial Progress Report on MMC to Uhlanga Lomhlabhathi following the First Progress Report which was presented to him in 2010.

During his key-note address, His Majesty King Zwelithini Goodwill Ka-Bhekuzulu emphasized the need to get as many men circumcised as possible. He said in that way, alongside other efforts to combat the spread of HIV and Aids, we can begin to realize the goal of living in an HIV free country. His Majesty the King also emphasized that, just because someone has undergone the procedure, it does not mean they should stop using condoms or engage in unprotected sex, because, as much as this reduced chances of contracting the HIV virus, it is not 100% proof. He also called on amabutho to delay sexual activities and abstain as part of a collective effort to fight the spread of HIV and Aids.

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