

Speech by KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the occasion of a
Discovery Health Dinner for the Medical Male Circumcision Shesha Project at
Umhlanga Ridge

4 November 2010

Dear Colleagues

I'm glad that we are all agreed that there is compelling evidence of the effectiveness of adult male circumcision in dramatically reducing HIV transmission to uninfected men as evidenced in serious scientific studies conducted amongst other countries Uganda, Kenya and South Africa.

As inhabitants of KwaZulu Natal Province, we consider ourselves as very fortunate to have a Monarch in the stature of King Goodwill Zwelithini who cares about the well-being His people.

Our King is concerned that the AIDS epidemic is negatively affecting the health and livelihood of the citizens as well the economic growth of our country.

HE is disheartened that the Province is plagued with multitudes of young adult deaths, AIDS orphans and socially and economically vulnerable children.

This Province continues to be the hardest hit in terms of the prevalence of HIV where five (5) out of the eleven (11) districts have an estimated HIV prevalence above 40%.

We are thus thankful that His Majesty has given an insight and directive that all men be circumcised and also compelled the Government to incorporate medical male circumcision as one of the tools in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

Male Medical Circumcision

Now following the call by His Majesty the King on the revival of male medical circumcision we launched the campaign on 10th April 2010. The target we have set ourselves is 2,5 million circumcisions by June 2014. In this regard we developed and are implementing a plan which has made it possible that since April 2010, a total of 10 229 Medical Male Circumcisions have been performed inclusive of the conventional method and the Tara Klamp.

We have been to Qalabusha Prison in Uthungulu, where we performed 148 circumcisions and have been to Durban University of Technology we circumcised 118 as well as the University of Zululand where we attended to 157 students.

Since we started with the male medical circumcisions we can report a number of benefits that has come out of this progressive initiative, for instance in:

- **Mobilizing** people to know their status.
- Supporting people with key prevention messaging in order to take proactive steps to a **healthy lifestyle** irrespective of HIV status
- Ensuring through HIV Counseling Testing that all people eligible for ARV are identified and put on the programme and
- **Increasing incidence** of health seeking behaviour.

I have also learnt that **St Mary's Hospital** through **DISCOVERY HEALTH** and **OPERATION ABRAHAM COLLABORATIVE's** sponsorship has heeded King **Goodwill Zwelithini's** call by opening a new clinic – **"Asiphile"** to encourage men of all ages to come forward for circumcision.

We are truly very proud and thankful for the support and initiative taken in opening the clinic in Caversham Road in Pinetown by Operation Abraham Collaborative as well as the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the backing of Discovery Health.

We are also very appreciative of the assistance given to Ngwelezane Hospital in Uthungulu District as well as with the training of 3 Doctors at Mbongolwane; 5 Eshowe; 5 at Catherine Booth; 2 at St Mary's, KwaMagwaza; 3 for Nseleni CHC as well as for all Doctors trained at Ngwelezane Hospital.

I know you may have wished to have already done more and that you have the capacity to do just that. As a Department we intend to remove all the impediments that have resulted in us not to having a Memorandum of Understanding that solidify and govern this relationship. Our Department has mandated Dr Sandile Shabalala here to work with yourselves in your quest to help expand the services for male medical circumcision.

We very much welcome your support as it augurs well with our desire and plans to improve on the number of people that get circumcised. As both Department of Health and the Government as a whole we are all out employing various

strategies and engaging with traditional leaders and healers, churches, tertiary institutions as well as correctional service facilities to make a success of this campaign. You may also have heard that we even hold mini camps during the school holidays in districts around the Province.

We are thankful for the added resource and expertise that come with Operation Abraham Collaborative international team that includes equipment and capacity building. We need all the assistance we can get in order to succeed with this high volume male medical circumcision being performed We are well aware of and would like to benefit from the successes the Jerusalem AIDS Project continues to make in Israel; Middle East and international HIV/AIDS prevention efforts in young people, including university students and men and in uniform.

You may also have heard that by January 2011 we will be commencing with the **neonatal male medical** circumcision. We are currently embarking on an awareness campaign for pregnant mothers to understand the importance of having their babies circumcised at birth. Your expertise and experience will no doubt be appreciated here.

Thank you very much for coming forward willing to partake in this history altering venture. I guess we are all in one with the most ardent crusaders for universal

male circumcision in the late nineteenth century, **Dr Peter Charles Remondino** who in 1891 said:

'Circumcision is like a substantial and well-secured life annuity; every year of life you draw the benefit, and it has not any drawbacks Parents cannot make a better paying investment for their little boys, as it insures them better health, greater capacity for labor, longer life, less nervousness, sickness, loss of time, and less doctor-bills, as well as increases their chances for an euthanasian death.'

Ladies and gentlemen, we thank you again for working towards the realization of His Majesty's noble dream.

Working together we will achieve more.