

Speech on behalf of KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the occasion of the Official Opening of The Oncology Centre at the Meridian Road at uMhlanga

19 February 2013

Specialist Oncologists – Dr Greg Landers and Dr Rory Callaghan

Representatives from Equra Health (Pty) Limited

Oncology Centre Management; staff and patients

Invited guests

Warm greetings to all

On behalf of our Honourable Premier, Dr Zweli Mkhize who represent all the people of KwaZulu, allow us today to say thank you to you for choosing this kind of a project as your sphere of contribution to the health development of the people of KZN.

We are indeed excited as this is one project that will not just change the community lives but will also positively impact on our quest to attain *A long and healthy life for all South Africans*

Our enthusiasm for this project is borne out of realisation that it conforms with the **Negotiated Service Delivery Agreement signed between the Minister and the President of S A** which calls for the concerted effort to be given to the Quadruple Burden of Disease, tabulated as:

- HIV & AIDS and TB
- High Maternal and Child Mortality
- Non-Communicable Diseases
- Violence and Injuries

We are thus saying in your vision and endeavors it does really show that you have listened and acted upon the invitation of our Government led by uMsholuzi for a Public Private Partnership arrangement as a means of solving our country's health problems.

As a Department, we are really happy that in you we have partners that understand and accept that healthy and equitable societies are characterised by an environment where citizens have to grow into healthy, secure and productive adults.

As a public service provider there is a limit on what we can do on this sphere of Oncology which is a rapidly evolving and exciting discipline broken down into medical, radiation and paediatric oncology. Our strength at the moment is more on increasing cancer awareness; cancer screening; collecting stats; initiating support groups and incorporating cancer into existing services.

Our messages directed to the citizenry are that for all cancers, it is possible to prevent at least one-third of the cases that occur through the better use of existing knowledge and sufficient resources and will. We also emphasise that a further one-third of cases can potentially be detected early and effectively treated.

In this country of ours where we have patients from First and Third World environments, the situation is compounded by the fact that there is a total number of 9 630 Specialists of which 5410 are in the Private sector and only 4220 attending to the health needs of the 90% of the populace. The truth of the matter is that the public sector on its own simply cannot manage.

It is a known factor that in the public sector we have a waiting list that varies between 3 weeks and 6 months whilst in any of the private centres, none exists. It thus follows that cancer will progress to be a significant cause of morbidity and mortality in the next few decades in our country. We are saying that our country will be contributing more to the current global cancer rates which accounted for the estimated incidence of 12.7 million new cancer cases in 2008 and that have a potential of rising to 21.4 million by 2030.

As of now, according to the World Health Organisation, nearly two thirds of all cancer diagnoses are occurring in low- and middle-income countries, South Africa is not immune in this.

We all need to pool our efforts and work together in addressing factors that can be controlled.

Our emphasis as the Department is on Primary Health Care Re-engineering geared towards citizens understanding more about the diseases; the prevention and management.

We are also saying practical and tangible support must be given to the enforcement of Legislations aimed at protecting lives like:

- Tobacco Products Control Act (1993)

- Ban on Trans fats in Foods (June 2011)
- Discontinuation in the production and distribution of baby bottles (October 2011)

Our populace also require more awareness and encouragement on positive Life style initiatives; on concentrating more on nutrition and embarking on physical activities.

We have to collaborate making it simpler for ordinary people to be aware of subtle body changes; on the importance of being aware of family history in as far as cancer is concern and more importantly that all forms of cancer are manageable when detected early.

In supporting the notion of a Public Private Partnership in as far as oncology treatment is concern; we recognise that there is indeed a dire shortage of oncology centres in the public sector as in this Province we only have three functional ones, vis at, Grey's; Addington and Inkosi Luthuli Central Hospitals. It is also a known fact that we have a very big shortage of Specialists and as expected a prolonged waiting period.

Through working together we are sure to increase access to service delivery where it matters most. We will be able to introduce and improve coverage of Specialists in the public sector. Most importantly we reduce waiting times thus reducing mortality rate from cancer and also ensure early diagnosis, treatment and care thus preventing late presentation of clients. Our collaboration can also speed up the quest to develop the new oncology centres in other region such as Ngwelezane; Port Shepstone and Madadeni.

There really exist an opportunity for a progressive private initiative here.

Programme Director, as the National Health Insurance proposes, we may agree on the Private Sector providing Capital financing; Equipment and Medical supplies; Clinical services and the Department of Health coming up with Sector Policies and Strategy; Service Packaging; Reimbursement for all clinical and non-clinical services as well as Performance monitoring.

We just have to guard against the lack of transparency and mistrust and put more emphasis on long term impetus.

For the sake of our nation we have to walk together and ensure that all the 50 million citizens have the same level of care.

Working together we will definitely achieve more as our President, Honourable Jacob Zuma extols us to.

I wish you luck in your new progressive venture and foresee good times ahead for all us.

I thank you