

**Speech by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the
occasion of the 2016 Nurses Graduation Ceremony at the
ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SHOWGROUND**

12 October 2016

Chairperson of the College Council - Mrs. E.N. Skweyiya

Members of the KZN Health MANCO

Principal – KwaZulu Natal – College of Nursing – Dr Z. Mthembu

Management of the KZN Nursing College and all its Sub-Campuses

Edendale Hospital – Dr T. Molutsoane

Members of the Media

Bazali boNesi abasha

Esize ngabo – the Grandaunds

All protocol observed

It is that time of the year again when we converge to say thank you to the Principal and the management of the KwaZulu Natal Nursing College and all its sub-campuses for again producing skilled nurses, well prepared and qualified to take care of the health needs of our citizens.

We are here to say well done for giving us a total of **1501 nurses**.

Yesterday we saw **280 Specialist Nurses** graduating and were very excited that amongst that crop were

Today, we are warmly receiving and graduating 451 Nurses that were trained from the Northern KZN Campuses and Sub-campuses, consisting of:

- **156 Nursing auxiliaries**- 1 year programme; formerly Lay Counsellors who upgraded to nursing
- **110 -2 year Bridging Course** who are now Professional Nurses
- **148 Diploma in Midwifery** which was a 1 year programme
- **12 Diploma in Psychiatric Nursing**; a 1 year programme
- **24 Diploma** in Primary Health Care
- **1 Enrolled Nurse** in a 2 year programme

Again, we want to give a special thank you to the Principal and all the Nursing Tutors for conceding to our request of offering career pathing to those who were serving as Lay Counsellors providing counselling services in the area of HIV and AIDS.

The Lay Counsellors were given options to choose entailing nutrition advisors; pharmacy assistants as well as nursing. Thanks to all the Nursing College's hard work, today we have those who chose nursing, graduating as **Nursing Auxiliaries** and are now eligible to be registered by the **South African Nursing Council**. One big advantage they come with is that of being capable and competent to simultaneously offer both **nursing and counselling service** in dealing with patients and clients. A milestone indeed!!

Chairperson of the College Council and Management of the College, allow me to add just one more request. We seriously and sincerely **plead for the introduction of Palliative Care Training** to your nursing training curriculum. As a start, I will request that you visit the hospital section of the Westville Correctional facility to learn how it has advantaged them in dealing with inmates with life threatening illnesses

giving them nursing care; pain management; symptom control; psychological, social, emotional care as well as spiritual support

From the onset, I consider it prudent that I inform you that KwaZulu Natal Province has to do more and perform better than any other Province as it carries a status of being the epicentre for HIV and AIDS and Tuberculosis (TB); high maternal and child mortality, alarming and ever-increasing incidence of Non-Communicable diseases (NCDs) as well as the pandemic of violence and trauma. These are what the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi refers to as *'four highways along which South Africans are marching to their graves.'*

It thus rests on your shoulders as nurses to ensure that this country meets the identified key targets set to be achieved by the health sector which are:

- Increasing Life Expectancy
- Decreasing Maternal and Child Mortality
- Combating HIV, AIDS and reducing the burden of disease from TB
- Strengthening Health System Effectiveness
- The reduction of non-communicable diseases.

As qualified nurses you are from now expected to positively impact on the vision of attaining a **Long and Healthy Life for all South Africans.**

Indeed, this is possible and attainable as in this Province we already have tangible proof that our nurses have made an immense contribution in the actualization of that quest. Today we are able to boldly say, if it were not for nurses, we would not have been able to:

- Reduce Mother to Child Transmission of HIV from 22% in 2008 to the current level of 1.2%;
- Increase the Number of facilities to access ART to close to 700
- Have close to 1, 3 million patients on ART Treatment as we speak
- Have more 72% of these patients on ART managed at Primary Health Care level.

This hard work has been recognised to the level that our former Premier was able to declare that the people of KwaZulu Natal are progressively **getting healthier and are now living longer**. All the more than **1 million patients on ART treatment** are now in good state of health and are able to continue working and taking care of themselves and their families.

For this 1 million mark milestone, we are saying thank you to our nurses because this programme is bigger than what doctors would have achieved. There is no way we could have succeeded in enrolling more than 1 million patients in this Province, if this programme was run by doctors who are very few and far in between. So this programme has only been successful because of the contribution of **NIMART trained nurses**. You too are encouraged to enroll for the NIMART programme especially now that we have started with the Test and Treat Programme.

Again, as new nurses, it will be best for you to immediately understand that going forward; it is no longer going to be business as usual as our

country is embarking on a revolutionary path which is the **Re-engineering of Primary Health Care**.

As to what this entail, was summed up during the historic First South African Nurses' Conference that was held in Sandton International Convention Centre in March 2011 by our **President, Honourable Jacob Zuma**, when he said:

'We want to see our nurses doing more to educate our people about how to manage their chronic conditions such as hypertension (or BP as ordinary people call it), diabetes, arthritis and other ailments.

Our nurses can and should be seen in schools teaching boys and girls about how to prevent pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections such as HIV, providing information on dental care and generally promoting healthy lifestyles."

In the true meaning of what our Honourable President said about nurses venturing out into the communities, I am reminded of a recently trending story about the groundbreaking operation performed at Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital by **Dr Ismail Bhorat**, the Head of the Foetal Surgical Unit.

This was about a surgery on an unborn baby at the hospital. It is called **pericardiocentesis** and it is an invasive procedure in which a needle and a tube is used to remove fluid from the sac around the heart and this was performed on a mother who is 29 weeks into her pregnancy.

Indeed praise is given to Dr Bhorat for this kind of an operation but in my books the greatest accolades belongs to a vigilant and meticulous nurse who was able to detect that the baby had a heart defect which is

so rare that it is seen only in one out of 30 000 cases. This is a nurse at Shaka Clinic in KwaDukuza who when giving antenatal care to this expectant mother using just a mere **fetoscope** realized that there were anomalies in the heartbeat of the foetus – immediately referred the patient to Stanger Hospital for a scan. Stanger, in turn made a referral to Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital where the surgery was performed.

Thanks to our well trained nurses!!

Again, this underscores the importance of having nurses going to communities to explain the importance of early attendance of ante-natal classes. Our people need to be made to understand that it becomes easier to pick up complications from a pregnancy and react quickly and appropriately to save both the mother and the baby's life.

As I end, I sincerely would like to personally congratulate the three nurses who will be receiving the **CITATION FOR ACADEMIC AWARD – for their outstanding achievements.**

It is my pleasure to call up the following candidates who have obtained the **highest marks AMONGST ALL LEARNERSS of the KZN College of Nursing in the FOLLOWING PROGRAMMES** and has passed the SOUTH AFRICAN NURSING COUNCIL examinations with **HONOURS.**

- **Diploma in Midwifery** bestowed to **Biyela Themba Audrey** from **NGWELEZANA Campus**
- **Bridging Course** Leading to Registration as a General Nurse bestowed to:

1. **Thwala Thulisile Rejoice** from Hlabisa Sub Campus
 2. **Biyela Nokukhanya Cecilia** from Bethesda Sub Campus
- **Enrolment as a Nurse** bestowed to **Simamane Duduzile** from Ceza Sub Campus
 - **Enrolment as an Auxiliary Nurse** bestowed to **Mthombo Hlengiwe Bongiwe** from Hlabisa Sub Campus

As I end, I sincerely would like to personally congratulate all of you for choosing this noble profession. Well done!! Now that in this field we recognise and reward excellence in the form of the prestigious **Cecilia Makiwane Recognition** as well as the **Marilyn Lehana Awards**. The race for those prepared to go an extra mile in the performance of their duties is open!!

Please accept and treat this noble profession as a lifelong training experience and continue treating patients with compassion as pronounced in the nurses' pledge where you say:

'.....the total health of my patients will be my first consideration'

I thank you