

Eulogy by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the sudden and untimely death of a 38 year old Dr Sakheni Ncube

01 February 2018

Members of the Ncube family

Abefundisi

Colleagues and friends of Dr Sakheni Ncube from both Nkandla and Dundee hospitals

Fellow mourners

Firstly, allow me to state how difficult and precarious it is to be a gynaecologist in this country. Dr Ncube was one.

On the 9th and 10th of March 2015, the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi convened a Medico-Legal Summit which was attended by Provincial MECs; the World Health Organization; the British Litigation Authority; the Medical Protection Society; Road Accident Fund and other stakeholders.

This was because the litigation against healthcare providers in this country has reached crisis levels causing practitioners to shun medical specialities, especially obstetrics and gynaecology, neurosurgery, neonatology, and orthopaedics.

In that summit, it was revealed that the annual subscriptions paid by medical professionals on the Indemnity Insurance are now very high and are bound to continue to increase. For instance, Obstetricians are now paying R187 000 a year as means to get indemnity cover against lawsuits. The will and zeal to perform in these specialities is further diminished by conscious awareness of the Lawyers who now tout at the gates of the hospitals and even in the Wards asking patients how they were treated and offering to sue on their behalf.

Indeed, all this has resulted in young doctors being reluctant to specialise in disciplines like obstetrics and gynaecology.

Regardless of all the threats of litigation, Dr Sakheni Ncube was steadfast in continuing to be involved in this discipline, diligently performing his duties in the Obstetrics and Gynaecology units, initially at Nkandla and up to his last days at Dundee hospital. He was indeed a brave, conscientious and committed Doctor who still had more than 25 years of his professional life to share with the nation!!

This caring attitude is confirmed by the utterances of the Dundee Hospital CEO, Ms Happy Khanyi who upon learning that Dr Ncube is no more – had this to say:

‘The staff and community at large have been dealt a major blow. We are all saddened. Dr Ncube was quiet and humble, and a very committed and hardworking cadre. He worked very well in our Obstetrics and Gynaecology department. He will be missed.’

To the Ncube family I thus want to say, I am here today not solely in my capacity as a fellow Doctor or MEC; but I am also representing the KwaZulu-Natal Government and the people of this Province to express our collective grief.

We all feel the loss in that in his short professional life, Dr Ncube has helped in improving the health status of our people in some of the most remote and impoverished areas of our Province.

Like all concerned, Dr Ncube has been aware that KwaZulu-Natal is home to just over 10 million people amongst whom roughly 220,000 births occur each year – 10% of these from teenage mothers.

The biggest proportion of maternal deaths we are faced with, comes from these teenage mothers – they actually account for 36% of maternal deaths. This is so because most of these young girls are unable to deal with the complications that normally arise in pregnancy

In honour of Dr Ncube – as health care workers as well as the community leaders in this District, we thus ought to strive for:

- Decrease new HIV infections in adolescent girls and young women
- Decrease teen pregnancies
- Keep girls in school till matric

As a Department, we will also continue playing our part to strengthen efforts to ensure safe child deliveries as we have already allocated:

- Dedicated obstetric ambulances to every sub-district to ensure prompt transfer of women in labour;
- Establishing maternity waiting homes, and
- Providing training on Essential Steps in Management of Obstetric Emergencies (ESMOE) to doctors and midwives.

Dr Ncube has played his part and has been for years in rural settings been able to help safely deliver a pregnant woman who also has hypertension; TB and HIV.

The demise of Dr Ncube is indeed a total loss to all of us.

Under my tenure as the MEC, I thus stand here with heavy memories of those colleagues who left us due to sudden and unexpected deaths, such as:

- Dr Samukelisiwe Theodora Sibeko (Camara) from Polela CHC who perished in a car accident
- Dr Lungile Ndebele in Newcastle who was stabbed by her partner
- Dr Thokozane Mthlane who we buried at Esikhawini
- Dr Mkhize from Woodlands who was stabbed by a patient in Mpumalanga Province
- Dr Bavesh Sewran who used to do sessions for at UMgungundlovu, shot dead outside his private practice
- Dr Vajnah Banoo Mohomed who was very good in dealing with survivors and victims of Gender Based Violence especially sexually violated children, who was found murdered at her home
- Dr Gugu Sithole from Mbalenhle CHC who died due to complications on surgery
- Dr Jay Clark from Greys' Hospital who suffered a heart attack
- Dr Xolani Shezi from Greys' Hospital who died in a car accident
- Dr Pearce from St Anne's Hospital who had a heart attack whilst cycling
- A doctor from Greys' Hospital who demised in a car accident; and
- A doctor from Prince Mshiyeni who demised after falling during a traditional ceremony.

I therefore call upon all the healthcare workers to find ways to take care of yourselves and safeguard your future.

To Dr Ncube's wife and his three children, we call upon the Almighty to give you strength to deal with this painful episode.

May his soul rest in eternal peace

Akwehlanga Lungehlanga

ENDS