MEDIA RELEASE

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KZN HEALTH MEC MS. NOMAGUGU SIMELANE CONGRATULATES HLUHLUWE CLINIC NURSE FOR HEROIC SERVICE TO RURAL COMMUNITIES

• Exceptionally skilled nurse known for hopping into ambulances to assist paramedics in remote areas;

• Never flinches when woken up at night to attend to medical emergencies;

• Recently delivered a set of twins, including a breech birth, with flawless execution

IN THE VAST rural flatlands of Umhlabuyalingana, where clinics and hospitals are sometimes located far away from communities, a shy and soft-spoken nurse is quietly gaining accolades for her exceptional dedication and skill.

Sister Thandazile Nhlenyama, based at Hluhluwe Clinic, is an advanced midwife, and has become a trusted lifeline for patients.

Whether it's an emergency delivery or a complicated medical situation, Sr. Nhlenyama, 52, is known for her quick thinking and ability to handle high-pressure situations with remarkable ease. So much so that hospital-bound paramedics do not think twice about taking a detour to Hluhluwe Clinic when their patients encounter complications – because they know Sr. Nhlenyama will be there to help.

Recently, Sr. Nhlenyama once again proved her exceptional skills when she successfully delivered twins, one of whom was in a breech presentation.

Breech deliveries, where the baby is positioned feet or buttocks first instead of the usual head-first position, come with several potential risks and complications. These risks include:

*A umbilical cord prolapse, where the umbilical cord is more likely to slip past the baby's body and become compressed, which can reduce oxygen flow to the baby.

*Brain injury or suffocation. Since the head is the largest part of the baby's body, if the head is the last part to deliver (after the body), it can become stuck in the birth canal, leading to brain injury or suffocation due to a lack of oxygen.

*The baby's arms and legs can become dislocated, and the delivery process can cause fractures, nerve damage, or other injuries.

However, Sr. Nhlenyama handled the delivery as though it were any other routine procedure.

"A breech is always a tricky situation. But I remained calm and relied on my training," Nhlenyama explains. "I used my fingers to locate the feet and guided the baby out.

The delivery was successful without any issues. I've seen many emergencies in my time."

Born in Mseleni, near Mbazwana, at Umkhanyakude District, Sr. Nhlenyama has been a nurse for over two decades. Her passion for nursing began long before she entered the profession. As a child, she was always fascinated by the healthcare profession, often pretending to be a nurse and caring for others while playing.

Today, that childhood fascination has turned into a remarkable career, with Sr. Nhlenyama having qualified as a nurse in 2003 and an advanced midwife since 2016.

Explaining her love for nursing and midwifery in particular, she said: "My love for helping people, especially women and babies, is what drives me.

"I have always felt an admiration for them. I draw a lot of satisfaction from knowing that I'm helping in a real way during critical moments."

Her approach to her work is grounded in compassion, and she approaches every case with the utmost care.

"When a woman is giving birth, she's already in pain. You don't want to add to that by being harsh. It's important to be gentle and show kindness, because psychologically, they're going through a lot already," she says. "We have to show compassion – it makes all the difference to how the mother experiences the birth."

Often, she is called upon to assist during transfers when patients experience difficulties at home, on the road, or on their way to the hospital.

"I get called when there are problems with the patients. I'm often the one to jump into the ambulance with the paramedics," she explains.

Sr. Nhlenyama, a mother of three, also strongly advocates for the presence of fathers during childbirth.

"It's really important for fathers to be present when their baby is born," Nhlenyama insists. "Seeing their support helps the mother cope better. We even let fathers cut the umbilical cord if they want to – it's something that strengthens their bond with the baby. It makes a big difference for both the mother and the family."

Despite her many years of experience and numerous successes, Sr. Nhlenyama's passion for nursing shows no sign of waning.

"I love what I do. When I'm with a patient, I don't even look at the time," she says. "I stay with them until I know I've done everything I can and I can pass them on to a colleague so that they're in good hands."

She's coy when asked about her aspirations for the future, but it soon becomes clear. "I'd love to see myself leading a maternity unit, where I can help train and mentor younger midwives and nurses."

During a recent visit to Hluhluwe Clinic, KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC Ms. Nomagugu Simelane praised Sr. Nhlenyama as an exemplary figure in the nursing profession.

“Sr. Nhlenyama embodies everything we strive for in healthcare,” MEC Simelane said. “Her dedication, her skills, and her commitment to her patients make her an outstanding ambassador for the nursing profession. She’s a great example to her peers and is living out the Nurses’ Pledge every day through her compassion and professionalism.”

MEC Simelane continued: “In a time when the pressures on healthcare workers are immense, Sr. Nhlenyama’s calmness under pressure, her willingness to go the extra mile, and her incredible skill are a source of inspiration to us all. She truly is an asset to our healthcare system.”

ENDS

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