

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS, Ms
NOMANTU NKOMO-RALEHOKO DURING THE OPENING OF THE CHEMO LAB
AND BURN UNIT AT DR GEORGE MKHARI ACADEMIC HOSPITAL ON THE 13
DECEMBER 2023.**

Programme Director: Mrs Nolo Bashe

Ward Cllr

Chair of the Portfolio Committee, Dr Digamela

Acting HoD, Mr Lesiba Malotana

DGMAH: Acting CEO- Dr. Godfrey Mbara

Representative Hospital board

Representatives from Royal Bafokeng Trust

Invited guests

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great honour that we gather today for the inauguration of the Chemo Lab and Burns Unit at Dr. George Mkhari Academic Hospital. This momentous occasion not only marks a significant advancement in our healthcare services but also embodies our theme of 'Reviving Hope' for countless individuals.

These new units, equipped with state-of-the-art technology, are designed to provide optimal care to patients facing the challenges of cancer and severe burn injuries. They stand as a testament to our dedication to offering comprehensive, cutting-edge treatment options to those in need. In these facilities, hope is not just a word; it's a tangible reality for our patients and their families.

The Chemo Lab is set to become a cornerstone in our fight against cancer, offering advanced treatment options tailored to individual patient needs. It's a place where hope is reignited, and personalized care becomes the norm, not the exception. Similarly, the Burns Unit is meticulously designed to provide specialized care for burn victims. From the initial treatment to the final stages of rehabilitation, this unit is a beacon of hope, guiding patients through their journey of healing and recovery.

As we gather here today, it is crucial to pause and reflect on the journey that has led us to this pivotal moment. Back in 2016, we faced a daunting challenge when the

Chemo Lab was at risk of being shut down. This was more than a facility at stake; it was the essential care for cancer patients that was in jeopardy. But, through perseverance and unwavering commitment, we turned a period of uncertainty into an opportunity to 'Revive Hope.

Fast forward to the present, after an intensive five-month construction period and firm commitment from our healthcare professionals, we are here to unveil a modernized facility. This revamped Chemo Lab is not just a building; it's a beacon of hope, now equipped to prepare cancer medications for 25 to 30 patients daily.

Similarly, the transformation journey of our Burns Unit is nothing short of remarkable. In 2019, we faced the difficult decision to halt its operations. This pause was not just a temporary closure of a facility but a moment of introspection about how we can better serve our patients. As we reopen its doors, the Burns Unit is not only restored but enhanced. It's a place where healing begins, now including paediatric beds to extend our care to the youngest members of our community.

This achievement aligns seamlessly with one of the core principles of the Gauteng Provincial Government to bring advanced medical facilities to our townships. The reopening of these units is more than a ceremonial event; it's a significant step towards making quality healthcare services more accessible to our local communities. We believe that access to healthcare is a fundamental right, not a privilege reserved for a few. By bringing these facilities closer to our people, we are breaking down barriers to healthcare access.

These newly reopened facilities stand as a testament to our dedication to providing top-tier healthcare that is local, accessible, and of the highest quality. They symbolize our commitment to not just treating illnesses but nurturing health and well-being in our community. As we celebrate this milestone, let us remember that these facilities are more than just buildings; they are a promise of hope, care, and recovery for every individual who walks through their doors. Today, we reaffirm our pledge to ensure that every member of our community has access to the healthcare they deserve.

Today's achievements at Dr. George Mkhari Academic Hospital are a shining example of the power of collaboration, particularly through our Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). In this regard, I want to specifically acknowledge the Smile Foundation and Royal Bafokeng. Their involvement has been crucial in realizing the goals we set out to achieve.

The Burns Unit's success is a direct result of this effective collaboration, showcasing what is possible when public and private sectors unite with a shared vision. This partnership extends beyond the construction of physical infrastructure; it is a commitment to the health and future of our community. Royal Bafokeng, in particular, has shown exceptional dedication, bringing not only financial support but also a wealth of knowledge and resources that have been instrumental in the development of this state-of-the-art facility.

Equally deserving of gratitude are Steve Biko Academic Hospital and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University. Their support and patience have been a cornerstone of our progress. During a critical period when Dr. George Mukhari Hospital needed additional space for chemotherapy preparation, these institutions stepped in seamlessly. They opened their doors, allowing us to use their facilities, thereby ensuring uninterrupted care for our cancer patients.

This act of solidarity from Steve Biko Academic Hospital and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University is a shining example of the collaborative spirit within the healthcare sector. Their willingness to share resources and expertise underlines a deep commitment to patient care that transcends institutional boundaries.

The journey to this day has been underpinned by a deep-seated belief in collaboration and mutual support within our healthcare community. It's this spirit of working together that has enabled us to uplift our services and provide exemplary care to those in need. The partnerships we have established are not merely about sharing physical spaces or resources; they are about aligning our efforts towards a common goal of enhanced healthcare delivery.

As we revel in the success of this momentous occasion, it's crucial to remember the enduring wisdom of the World Health Organization: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." This is particularly true in the context of burns, which are often preventable. While we take pride in the advanced capabilities of our newly upgraded facilities, our responsibility extends beyond treatment.

We are equally committed to implementing community education and awareness initiatives. Our aim is to not only offer outstanding medical care but also to equip our community with the necessary knowledge and tools to prevent such injuries. By

focusing on prevention, we can significantly reduce the incidence of burns, ultimately lessening the burden on both individuals and our healthcare system.

This commitment to prevention and education forms a critical part of our holistic approach to healthcare. We believe that empowering individuals with information and practical guidance is key to fostering a healthier, safer community. Our programs will focus on disseminating vital information about burn prevention, safety measures, and first aid responses.

Through workshops, community outreach, and collaboration with local organizations, we aim to create an informed public that is better equipped to avoid and, if necessary, respond effectively to burn injuries. In doing so, we not only enhance the well-being of our community but also ensure that our state-of-the-art facilities are utilized in the most effective and efficient manner, focusing on severe cases that truly require advanced medical intervention.

So, ladies and gentlemen, today's celebration is much more than a momentary event; it is a significant stride towards a healthier future for all. Our recent accomplishments in upgrading these facilities are in perfect harmony with the ideals of the National Health Insurance. This initiative goes beyond just ticking off compliance boxes; it is about establishing a solid foundation for an inclusive healthcare system that caters to every individual.

By enhancing our medical facilities, we are not only fulfilling immediate healthcare needs but also investing in the long-term health and prosperity of our Province. This effort transcends the conventional scope of healthcare; it's a commitment to ensuring that quality medical care is accessible to everyone, thereby contributing to the overall well-being of our community.

In this regard, our actions today are proactive steps towards a future where equitable healthcare is a given. The upgrades we are celebrating are integral to a larger mission of creating a healthcare system that serves all segments of our society, aligning with the NHI's vision of a system that leaves no one behind. We're not just constructing buildings; we are building a healthier, more inclusive society.

This is an investment in the health of our people, in their future, and in the sustainable development of our Province. By prioritizing healthcare, we are fostering a community

that is not only healthier but also more productive and resilient, paving the way for continued growth and prosperity.

As we stand at the threshold of a new chapter in our healthcare journey, I am reminded of the incredible spirit of cooperation that has brought us to this point. Today's achievements are a living testament to the power of unity and shared commitment towards the health and well-being of our community. Each step we have taken together has been a step towards a brighter, healthier future for all. This journey is a shining example of what we can achieve when we join hands and hearts for a common purpose.

I would like to take a moment to highlight the invaluable role our community has played in the success of these healthcare initiatives. The support, understanding, and active participation of our community members are the lifeblood of our efforts.

Their engagement is crucial in making these services not just available but truly effective. We invite each member of our community to take an active role in their health and well-being and to participate wholeheartedly in the health programs and initiatives we will be rolling out. Your health is not just our priority; it should be yours too.

As we draw this event to a close, I want to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude. A heartfelt thank you goes out to our healthcare professionals, support staff, government officials, partners, and every individual who has contributed to turning this dream into a reality. Your dedication, passion, and tireless work are the pillars upon which today's success stands. It is because of your relentless efforts that we are here, celebrating this momentous day.

Looking forward, let us not become complacent with our current success. The inauguration of these facilities is not the end of our journey but the beginning of a new, more dynamic phase. We are committed to continuous improvement, to learning from each experience, and to adapting our healthcare services to meet the evolving needs of our community. Our work is never done; our mission is ongoing, and our dedication to health and well-being is unwavering.

As we conclude today's celebration, let's look to the future with hope and anticipation. There's more exciting news on the horizon. We are in the process of building a state-of-the-art oncology center right here at Dr. George Mukhari Academic Hospital. This new facility is a testament to our commitment to providing the highest standard of

healthcare. Soon, we will gather again to celebrate another milestone, the opening of this remarkable center, which will be another significant step in our journey to keep our community healthy and thriving.

Thank you all for being part of this incredible journey. Your support and belief in our vision have been the driving force behind our achievements. Let us continue to work together, look forward to the future, and embrace the good things that are yet to come. Together, we are making a difference, today and every day.