

NEWS BULLETIN

Official Newsletter of the Gauteng Department of Health

17 December 2023



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#AsibeHealthyGP

Gauteng health geared to meet demand for health services during festive

The Gauteng public health system is geared-up to meet the anticipated demand for health services during this festive season.

This is the assurance given by Gauteng MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko during a media briefing on the state of readiness for the festive season on Thursday (15 December) at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital.

The MEC stated that the department has taken proactive measures to ensure adequate staffing levels, allocation of the necessary resources and equipment needed to handle any eventuality during this busy season of the year.

"We have put measures in place to ensure uninterrupted healthcare services across all our facilities to handle any incident that might require health response especially trauma related incidents," confirmed the MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko.

Primary healthcare facilities will remain open normally during this period to render services to communities throughout the festive period.

The increased travel, holiday activities and festivities taking place across the province during the festive can lead to an uptick in road accidents, injuries, and medical emergencies, the Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) is ready to meet the anticipated demand for emergency medical services.

All hospital's accident and emergency departments and trauma units have put in place contingency measures to swiftly respond to any related cases.

The MEC confirmed that the Gauteng Emergency Medical Services (EMS) paramedics are on high alert to respond to emergencies promptly and efficiently and will form part of the festive season safety multi-sectoral response teams across the province.

"We have deployed a fleet of emergency vehicles to enhance the EMS response during the festive season. A total of 1 820 vehicles will be strategically stationed across all five health districts in the province to provide swift medical assistance to our residents. These include Ambulances, Planned Patient Transport, Disaster, Armoured violent incidents Ambulance, Special rescue vehicles, Primary Response Vehicles and logistical support vehicles.

"All GDoH's 11 Forensic Pathology Service (FPS) offices will remain operational throughout the festive season. A total of 72 FPS vehicles including two disaster response trucks have been deployed to ensure smooth operation across the five health districts. Operational staff at FPS including 62 pathologists will be on duty, while all 27 Clinical Forensic Medical Services Units will continue to play a



MEC Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko joined President Cyril Ramaphosa to Launch South Africa's 2nd Generation Country Review Report. The review process involves an in-depth analysis of a country's policies, institutions, and practices, conducted by a team of African experts. The South African Second-Generation Country Review Report gave insights into the progress made by South Africa in various areas, highlighting its successes and identifying areas for improvement as per its recommendations.

critical role in providing forensic medical examinations and support to victims of crime including support to the police in dealing with drunken-driving incidents," said MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko.

In addition, the MEC has also urged communities to stay safe and avoid risky behaviours resulting in avoidable accidents and subsequent hospitalisation. She further requested communities to refrain from making prank calls to emergency lines, as this diverts resources away from actual emergencies.

"We continue to appeal to communities to protect our health workers, including EMS paramedics, as they will be providing critical services during this period," pleaded MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko.

REFLECTING ON A TRANSFORMATIVE YEAR 2023: THE TIDE HAS TURNED! ▶

These are some of the notable strides made in enhancing healthcare accessibility, improving the patient experience, and upgrading public health infrastructure to ensure that Gauteng residents receive the quality health services they deserve. As we approach 2024, the GDoH remains determined to continue working tirelessly in ensuring that the future of healthcare in the province holds great promise.

The year 2023 has been a transformative year for the public health system in Gauteng. A year ago, the department experienced numerous challenges affecting patients experience of care as well as access to quality health services.

The Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) has through resilience, innovation and a shared vision, turned the tide in the journey to nurse the Gauteng healthcare system to its former glory as the jewel of public healthcare.

As we approach the end of the year, it's a time for reflection on the journey taken to restore hope to millions of people who walk through the doors of health facilities annually to access health services. Notable progress has been made in ensuring equitable access to healthcare services to residents, especially those living in previously disadvantaged communities.



Enhancing accessibility to healthcare services #AsibeHealthyGP

The department has increased the number of Community Health Centres offering 24-hour services from 36 to 38, this has enabled the provision of healthcare services to vulnerable and remote communities.

Furthermore, the deployment of 13 700 Ward Based Outreach teams consisting of Community Health Workers has proven to be instrumental in widening the reach in taking health services to communities through households' visits. In addition, mobile clinics have also been deployed to deliver health screening services and drive public education to residents living in hostels, informal settlements, and townships.

Improving patient experience of care

The negative attitude portrayed by healthcare workers towards patients, their families and the public have for many years been identified as one of the significant



A smile is more than an expression
A smile is more than a mindset
A smile is an attitude
A smile is an invitation
I Serve with a Smile

factors that contribute to putting the public healthcare system under scrutiny.

In an effort to change the status-quo, the department has launched the I Serve With A Smile campaign - a movement built upon the principles of Batho Pele which aims to infuse the healthcare system with warmth, compassion, and a renewed commitment to the public service.

MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko has emphasised that the heart of healthcare profession is to serve and further pleaded with health workers to assume the responsibility to create an environment where patients feel valued, respected, and supported whenever they visit our facilities.



Accelerated delivery and refurbishments of our infrastructure

This year the Department has made strides to ensure upgrades of public health infrastructure either through the refurbishment of old facilities or through building new ones.

A number of newly built state-of-the-art clinics including Sebokeng Zone 17 in Sebokeng, and Finetown clinic, South of Johannesburg, have been officially handed over to communities who now have access to a range of health services.

The department has also strengthened efforts in bringing critical and specialised healthcare services closer to our communities. The newly built Phillip Moyo Community Healthcare Centre's Midwife Obstetrics Unit in Daveyton offers maternal health services which include antenatal and postnatal care, midwifery and obstetrics, and counselling on choice of termination of pregnancy amongst others. In addition, the department has successfully opened the Zola Wits Dental Clinic to bring dental services to the residents of Soweto.



Progress has also been made in the expansion of health service offerings to vulnerable communities such as Key Populations groups (sex workers, persons who inject drugs, inmates and members of the LGBTQI+). Today all five health districts are a home to Key Population friendly service centre, with Sedibeng District being the latest development. These centres play an important role in strengthening efforts to reduce the transmission of HIV and STI infections among this group.

The GDoH recognises that combatting gender-based violence and femicide requires concerted efforts across all spheres of government. The recent opening of a 24-hour Clinical Forensic Medical Services (CFMS) centre at Carletonville Hospital reaffirms the commitment to ensure that victims and survivors of GBV, rape and sexual assault have access to the much-needed services such as medical and nursing services, social work and psychological services in a single-secure location.

The commitment to renovating and maintaining healthcare facilities across Gauteng remains a priority. Refurbishments of facilities such as Tambo Memorial Hospital, Tara Hospital, Bertha Gxowa Hospital, Helen Joseph, and Kopanong Hospital are well underway to improve access to quality healthcare services for the residents of Gauteng.

These are some of the notable strides made in enhancing healthcare accessibility, improving the patient experience, and upgrading public health infrastructure to ensure that Gauteng residents receive the quality health services they deserve. As we approach 2024, the GDoH remains determined to continue working tirelessly in ensuring that the future of healthcare in the province holds great promise.



Cancer patients at Dr George Mukhari will now receive efficient and timely treatment

Cancer patients undergoing treatment at the Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital (DGMAH) will now receive efficient and timely treatment.

This comes after the Gauteng MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko on Wednesday (13 December) opened a Chemotherapy Laboratory where the hospital will now be able to mix different types of chemotherapy medications in-house, with a capacity to for a minimum of 25 to 30 patients to be served per day.

MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko said that the newly opened Chemotherapy Laboratory is a significant step in the Gauteng Department of Health's (GDoH) commitment to expanding resources and improving health care services in Gauteng.

"This in-house laboratory will address the inefficiencies that the hospital encountered in the past including the delay in delivery of medicines which resulted in inconveniences for



patients and healthcare providers. Oncologists will have immediate access to medication to treat a wide variety of cancers including gynaecological cancers, breast cancer and blood cancers such as Leukaemia," said the MEC.

The newly opened Chemotherapy Lab is as result of the GDoH's continuous efforts to transform its facilities, while refurbishing and repurposing infrastructure to improve care and service delivery for patients in the province.

In addition, the MEC reopened the hospital's Burns Unit which was repurposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The reopened unit boasts 32 beds for both adult patients and paediatrics, a theatre room and an Intensive Care Unit with three beds and will help to respond to the growing need for admissions of burns victims.

Oncologists will have immediate access to medication to treat a wide variety of cancers including gynaecological cancers, breast cancer and blood cancers such as Leukaemia."
~ MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko

Over 8000 surgeries performed in two months as war against surgical backlogs gains momentum

In a bid to reduce surgical backlogs in public hospitals, the Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) in July during Mandela Day declared war against surgical backlogs by introducing monthly surgical marathons.

As at June 2023, the department's surgical backlog was sitting at 37 000. Through the intervention programme this has been reduced by half as of November 2023.

"The department is chasing a moving target due to the fluctuation in the surgical procedure numbers. However, we are making inroads as we have been consistently performing surgical marathons on a weekly and monthly basis and the process has also benefited health practitioners in terms of building capacity and skills transfer," explains MEC for Health and Wellness Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko.

The four academic hospitals (Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital, Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital, Steve Biko Academic Hospital and Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital) account for 70% of the workload. Of the procedures that need to be performed, General Surgery, Cataracts/



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Ophthalmology and Orthopaedics areas constitute 79%.

The department is continuously reviewing its approach to accelerate the surgical marathons. Over the course of just two months, between November and December 2023, the GDoH achieved

a major milestone, in improving patient access to vital surgical procedures, when the surgical teams across facilities successfully performed around 8 480 surgeries. This means on average the around 2000 procedures were done weekly during this period.

Some of the strategies the department is exploring includes looking at the decentralisation of surgical services for procedures like cataracts and arthroplasty, to other facilities other than academic hospitals; increasing emergency theatre availability and maximising theatre utilisation rates. The department has now appointed data captureurs to ensure efficient data management across all five health districts. The interns play a vital role in updating surgical dashboard lists on a daily basis and maintaining accurate master lists of patients waiting for surgeries in hospitals.

The surgical marathon project has restored much hope to thousands of patients and their families whose lives have been impacted one way or the other. The progress made thus far brings the Department closer to achieving a healthcare system that ensures prompt and quality care for all residents of Gauteng.

More blind patients regain their sense of mobility



The Department provides the visually impaired clients with walking canes, talking watches, sunglasses, money templates, coin selectors, and liquid level indicators. Through the assistance of Non-Profit Organisations, the blind patients are rehabilitated by orientating them and providing them with mobility skills to become active participants in society."

Koketso Maraba

The Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) has partnered with Non-Profit Organisations to improve the number of rehabilitations for the blind and partially sighted people. To date, 111 visually impaired patients were integrated into their communities from October 2022 to March 2023. This was made possible through collaboration with South African Guide-dog Association for the Blind and South African Mobility for the Blind Trust.

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"We offer our clients customised training according to their needs. For instance, a person who travels to work using public transport is trained on the route they take to their transport and how to get to their place of work. However, a person who lives alone will need to be trained on how to prepare meals, use the restroom, and navigate through the house," states Parishna Ramluckan, the CEO of South African Mobility for the Blind Trust.

Ramluckan also emphasises that the NPO is committed to assisting the blind with adapting to the constantly changing world of technology, by training blind people to use smartphones, ATM machines, and PCs.

Simon Rabothata from the GDoH explains that the department continuously provides rehabilitation services by providing patients with assistive devices for all types of disabilities.

Sharing his experience, Thomas Sithole (72) from Hammaskraal said that the mobility training has empowered him to use the restroom, walk to the shop to buy groceries, walk to the clinic, count money, and make tea by himself.

MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko, previously stated that the department has expanded resources to equip people living with disabilities with the necessary tools to maintain or improve their functioning and independence. She emphasised that these assistive devices will not only facilitate their equal participation in society but also enhance their overall well-being.



WHEN CALLING FOR AN AMBULANCE

STAY CALM. DIAL 10177 OR 112.
PROVIDE YOUR CONTACT NUMBER.
STATE THE NATURE OF YOUR EMERGENCY AND
PROVIDE A LANDMARK OR ADDRESS

FOR EMERGENCIES



112



10177

YOUR FEEDBACK

MATTERS TO US!

Knowledgeable and friendly staff at Charlotte Maxeke Oncology unit complimented

Good day

I am a new patient at Charlotte Maxeke hospital in the Oncology unit. My first appointment was Wednesday, 13 December 2023. I went early at 5h30 in the morning and was greeted by a very friendly lady at the reception. Her office is right at the door. (tall white lady with long dark hair). She explained nicely where we must sit and how all will work for the day.

Unfortunately, I don't have her name, but she really set me at ease, and I was already impressed with the unit. Then my second appointment was on Thursday, 14 December 2023 and once again the same lady greeted us so friendly early in the morning and explained to us again how our day 2 will work. It really helps if you have friendly and knowledgeable staff at the desk.

My second compliment is to nurse Carol who gives chemo. She is a superstar in your unit. She very thoroughly explained in detail what is going to happen, what to do and what not to do. If she did not explain to me that I was not supposed to drink cold beverages after my chemo I would not have known. She is very knowledgeable and super friendly. You really need to give these two ladies spotlight awards for great customer service!

Well done to them. They make your treatment journey a bit more pleasurable and easier.

Thank you
Mr J C

* Letter grammatically edited



QUALITY ASSURANCE
CONTACT US!



For any hospital or clinic complaints please contact the Gauteng Department of Health on the 24-hour customer line on.

0800 203 886 (Toll free number)

patients.health@gauteng.gov.za or support@gauteng.gov.za

SMS : 35023

For letters, contribution and suggestion contact GDoHstories@gauteng.gov.za

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Gauteng Department of Health



Seasons Greetings

[Warmest wishes for a safe and joyful holiday season]

Dear New Bulletin reader

The News Bulletin team extends warmest wishes for a safe and joyful holiday season to our readers. It has been a challenging year for all of us and we would like to take a moment to thank each and every one of you for being part of our community.

The News Bulletin has been a vital platform for the Gauteng Department of Health to share important updates on departmental programmes, crucial health information, and stories of resilience throughout the year. We are grateful for your continued support, readership and engagement and look forward to sharing more informative and inspiring content with you in the coming year.

As we bid farewell to the year, we remain committed to our mission of providing quality healthcare services and improving the well-being of the people of Gauteng. During this festive season, we encourage you to take time to rest, rejuvenate, and cherish the moments with your loved ones.

Alongside the celebrations, we'd like to share important health messages to ensure your health and well-being.

- Drink in moderation, know your limits, and always have a designated driver or use alternative transportation options.
- Practice good hygiene, cook meats thoroughly, and store leftovers properly to prevent foodborne illnesses.
- Prioritise your sexual health by practicing safe sex and maintaining open communication with your partner.
- If traveling to malaria-prone areas, protect yourself with insect repellents, long-sleeved clothing, and, if prescribed, antimalarial medication.
- Always keep emergency numbers handy where they can be easily accessed in cases of emergency. Do not misuse the numbers by making prank calls as this will delay assistance to those that need help and can lead to fatalities.

Thank you for your loyal support throughout 2023.

Kindly note that this is the last edition of the News Bulletin for the year 2023. The next edition will come out in the second week of January 2024.

Wishing you and your family a safe, joyful, and healthy festive season!

Gauteng Health News Bulletin Team.