

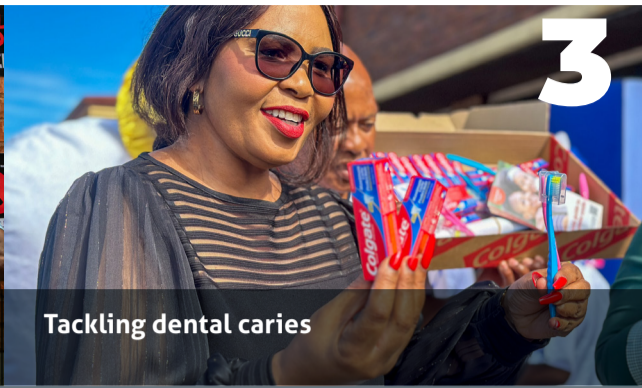
NEWS BULLETIN

Official Newsletter of the Gauteng Department of Health

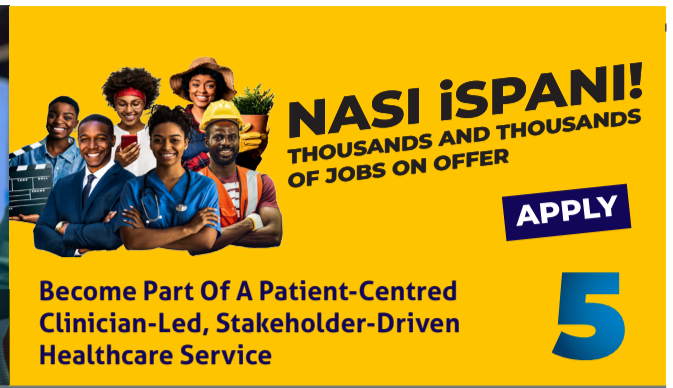
24 MARCH 2024



TB survivors advice



Tackling dental caries

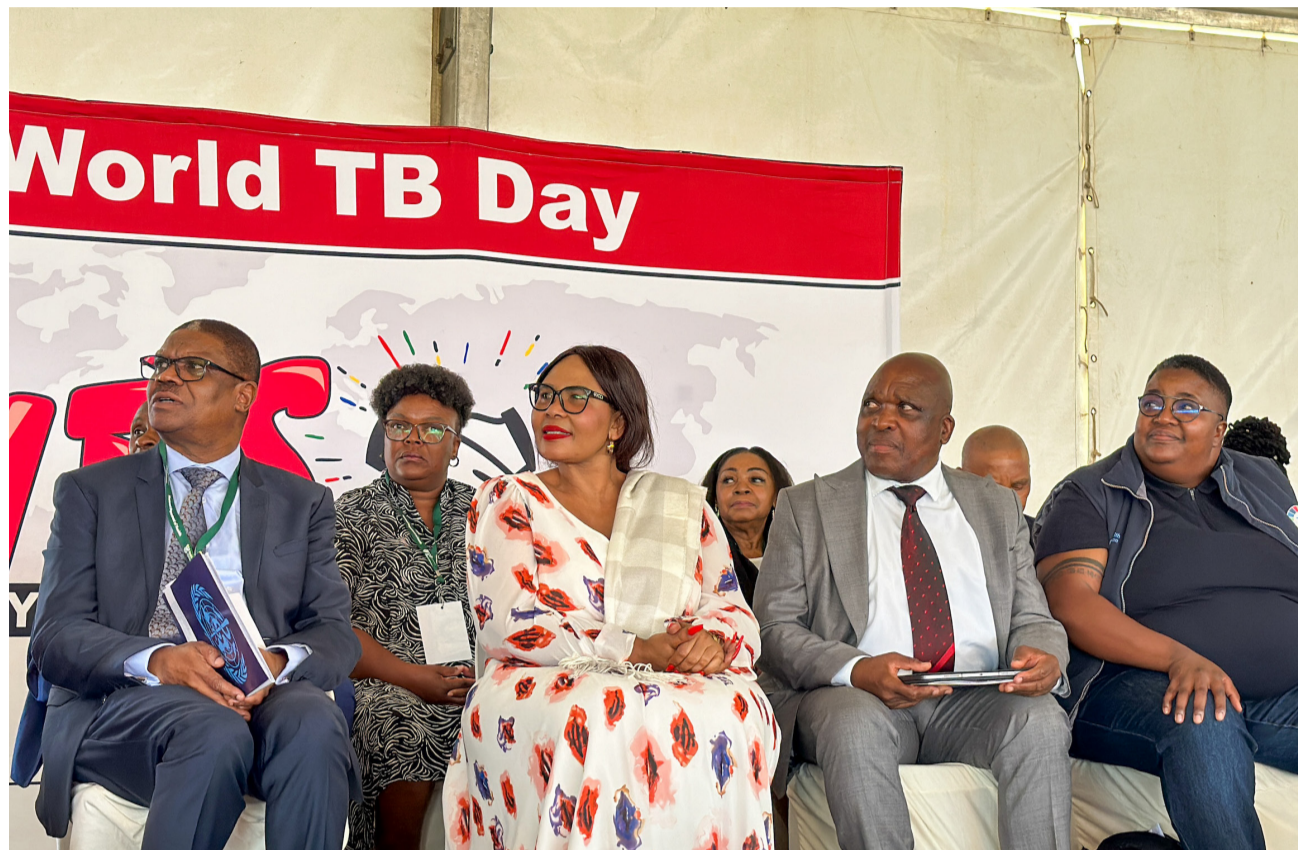


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While TB is a curable disease, early detection is important to prevent the spread of this airborne disease. I therefore want to urge our communities to visit their nearest facilities and mobile clinics for TB screening as soon as they experience symptoms to prevent complications and fatalities," advised MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko

Curable TB claims 1.5 million lives per year

As the country today (Sunday, 24 March) joins the global community in commemorating the World Stop TB Day under the theme "Yes! You and I Can End TB," the Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) has called on communities to access free TB screening services, adhere to TB treatment and complete the full course of treatment to reduce mortality and disease progression.

The call comes as the Minister of Health Dr Joe Phaahla accompanied by Gauteng MEC for Health and Wellness, Ms Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko, representatives of the South African National Aids Council (SANAC), World Health Organisation, Civis Society and other sectors of society, led the World Stop TB Day activities at Wilberforce Community College in Sedibeng.

Dr Phaahla who delivered a key note address on behalf of the Deputy President and SANAC Chairperson Mr Paul Mashatile said that government and its partners have invested significantly towards ending TB which must see a reduction on infections, drug resistant TB, missing patients, and reduced TB-related deaths.

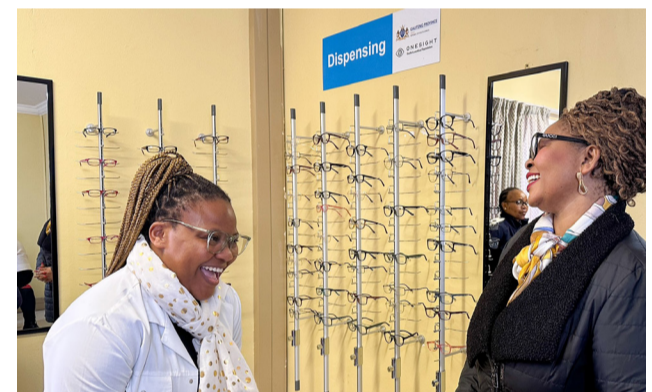
"It has been stated by both scientists and clinicians repeatedly that TB remains one of the greatest public health threats in our country today. For several years, it has remained the leading cause of death claiming around 1,5 million lives per year. It also accounts for more than half of deaths among people living with HIV (PLHIV) at 53%, and yet, TB is curable. This means that the deaths are unnecessary and working together, we can certainly put an end to them. Working together we can rid the country of the scorn of struggling with the preventable and curable, while other nations, with less resources and less complexities than ours are able to move fast and further forward," stated Dr Phaahla.

The GDoH has observed a worrisome 13.5% increase in TB incidence, rising from 27,924 cases in 2022 to 31,704 cases in 2023. Between April and December 2023, a total of, 23 340 patients were diagnosed for Drug susceptible (DS) TB across the province and 20 957 (89.8%) were initiated on TB treatment. Of concern is the fact that 2,383 patients were not initiated on TB treatment as part of the lost to follow-up cohort, posing a risk of further transmission. The reasons vary from untraceable contacts, wrong addresses and relocation amongst others.

Metropolitan areas bear the highest burden of TB in the province, with Johannesburg District contributing 38% of diagnosed TB cases, followed by Tshwane at 28%, Ekurhuleni at 25%, Sedibeng at 9%, and West Rand at 7%. The reported high TB cases are based in Soweto and Hillbrow - Johannesburg District; Tembisa and Katlehong - Ekurhuleni District; Soshanguve - Tshwane District; Emfuleni - Sedibeng District and Krugersdorp and Carletonville - West Rand District. The drivers of the TB epidemic observed in hotspot areas include overcrowding, low socio-economic status, under nutrition and HIV co-infection.

To address these challenges and improve TB outcomes, the GDoH has intensified outreach programme focusing on high-burden areas such as townships, informal settlements, and hostels (TISH) with the aim of providing essential services including extensive TB health education, mobile Chest X-ray screenings, patient tracing, and facilitating access to care.

The Department is implementing TB screening at all health facilities for early diagnosis and prompt treatment initiation. In addition, it has



As the world observed World Optometry Day on Saturday, 23 March 2024, the Gauteng Department of Health has reflected on the strides made to improve access to eye care services including the provision of spectacles and cataract surgeries amongst others.

Worth noting is the milestone that Leratong Hospital achieved by surpassing 10 000 successful cataract surgeries late last year and the cataract surgical marathons that are taking place across a significant number of facilities including Odi and Mamelodi Hospitals.

Working with partners such as the One Sight Foundation, the GDoH has ensured the opening of state-of-the-art eye clinics in hospitals in township, informal settlement and hostel communities. These facilities include Far East Rand Hospital, Odi Hospital and Leratong Hospital amongst others, and offer comprehensive eye care services which include screening, diagnosis and treatment.

[#AsibeHealthyGP](#)

is also implementing the BPAL Drug Resistance TB treatment, which reduces the pill burden and minimises side effects. This treatment protocol was launched in September 2023 by Dr. Phaahla to contribute to better DR-TB outcomes.

>>> [Continued on page 2](#)

Currently, there are 73 decentralised sites across the province, enabling patients to receive treatment closer to their homes, reducing the need for admission to Sizwe Tropical Disease Hospital.

"It is crucial for communities, especially those with a positive TB contact, to undergo screening for early detection. While TB is a curable disease, early detection is important to prevent the spread of this airborne disease. I therefore want to urge our communities to visit their nearest facilities and mobile clinics for TB screening as soon as they experience symptoms to prevent complications and fatalities," advised MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko.

She further said that was concerning that more women are presenting at health facilities to screen for TB as compared to males while it is common knowledge that men are most vulnerable to TB than women. The GDoH has made provision for men friendly clinics to encourage more males to visit our facilities for comprehensive healthcare screening.

Minister Phaahla emphasised that the achievement of adequate financing of the TB response in the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for HIV, TB and STIs for the period 2023 to 2028 is a significant milestone as it will ensure the acceleration of efforts towards the global 2030 target of ending TB, HIV and STIs

as public health threats. Just over R4 billion was budgeted in 2024/2025 national budget, meeting the projected needs for implementing the NSP.

TB is a communicable disease caused by bacillus Mycobacterium tuberculosis, primarily spreads through the air when a TB infected person expel the bacteria into the air by coughing. While the disease mainly affects the lungs, it can also impact other parts. Adults, particularly men, are more susceptible to TB than females, with most of the common symptoms include persistent cough for more than 24 hours, weight loss, loss of appetite, night sweats, and lethargy.

Yes! You and I can end TB, survivors confirm

Survivors and those currently taking treatment for Tuberculosis (TB) can attest that through effective treatment, the infectious disease can be cured and halted from spreading.

Selina Tshabalala, a TB survivor who was diagnosed in 1998 and finished her treatment in 1999 after completing her regime six month later has urged people who suspect that they have the disease to get screened and ensure that they stick to their treatment as prescribed.

"It is important that people visit their local clinic to get examined for this infectious disease when they experience TB related symptoms such as a long lasting cough, exhaustion, high temperature or sweat and loss of appetite.

"When I got diagnosed, the most prominent symptom was consistent night sweats where I could even squeeze out the sweat from my clothes. That is when I decided to get check and immediately after finding out of my diagnosis, I ensured that I stick to my treatment as I want to see myself free from the misery and back to my old self," explains Tshabalala.

Tshabalala warned those that do not complete their treatment of the dire consequences of their



actions, as it can make the TB infection become worse and harder to treat, and cause the medication that they are taking not to be as effective.

Another survivor, Bheki Vundla who got infected with TB in 2011 while working in the mines in Mpumalanga said that being confirmed to have the disease and the need to take treatment for months was very scary, however, through the belief and love of life, her persisted.

"I had to be stronger and stick to my treatment regime for my children. I had just started a new job when I got diagnosed and I made sure that I follow the doctor's rules and in less than a year after tests, I was told that I do not have TB and can continue with work.

"I am grateful that I did not default on my treatment regime as I am now a proud and confident TB survivor who also goes around encouraging other to complete their treatment to avoid further complications and drug resistance," states Vundla.

TB is preventable and curable. Even those that are HIV positive and infected with TB can be cured of the disease if they stick to their treatment regime. Treatment for TB is taken every day for six (6) to eight (8) months.

Screening for TB and treatment is free and accessible at all government healthcare facilities and those that have defaulted are urged to ask their local clinic to put them back on their treatment to achieve cure.



Immunisation catch-up programme protects children against infectious diseases

After months of defaulting from the child immunisation programme, two six-year-old children of Lindiwe Rampyapedi (33) now have protection to fight against infectious diseases.

This comes after they finally received their doses of the Td (Tetanus Diphtheria) vaccine during the Gauteng Department of Health's (GDoH) catch-up immunisation programme at Freedom Square (Phuma Silwe) informal settlement in Tembisa, Ekurhuleni. The vaccine prevents tetanus which cause painful stiffening of muscles and diphtheria which can lead to difficulty breathing, heart failure, paralysis or death.

Rampyapedi said that her children defaulted on their routine immunisation as per the Road to Health card due to various reasons including the lack of time to take her children to the clinic.

"I am happy that my children finally got their immunisation doses to protect them against infectious diseases. Sometimes we go to the local clinic and find out that the particular vaccine we went there for is not available on the day and we end up not getting a chance to go again. However, I am grateful that the Department has brought these services to us," said Rampyapedi.

The catch-up immunisation programme at Freedom Square comes after the MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko's visit to the neighbouring Sethokga Hostel in the previous week. She discovered then that there was a high number of children who had missed their routine immunisation and a significant number of people who have defaulted on their HIV and TB treatment who are residents from the informal settlement.

During the catch-up immunisation programme, a total of 69 children at the informal settlement received their doses including the measles and Tetanus Diphtheria vaccines, Vitamin A and deworming tablets amongst others.

The GDoH also rendered a basket of health services for the much older community members which include STI and HIV testing, hypertension and diabetes screening, Pap Smear, family planning and Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

Over 150 people tested for STIs, HIV, hypertension and diabetes while six (6) did Pap smear screening and five (5) received an implant contraceptive device for prevention of pregnancy, and one person got initiated on PrEP to protect against HIV infection.

MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko said that the GDoH has intensified this programme to take health services to the doorstep of communities across the province, particularly those living in townships, informal settlements and hostels.

"As part of the provincial government's elevated priorities, we are taking health services straight to communities to ensure that we educate them about health and wellness, leading healthy lifestyles and ensuring that their stick to their treatment regime to improve our their health outcomes," said the MEC.

In addition, MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko conducted a door-to-door campaign to educate the residents of Freedom Square informal settlement about the importance of prevention, early detection and treatment initiation to prevent health complications.

Tooth decay affects 60% of primary school children



Thusong Primary School in Kagiso, Krugersdorp have this week (19 March) received free oral health services including screening and prevention of tooth decay and gum disease, fillings and dental cleaning amongst other services.

The free services are part of the Gauteng Department of Health's (GDoH) Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP) which coincided with the World Oral Health Day which is observed annually on 20 March, to empower individuals with knowledge and raise awareness about the risks associated with poor oral hygiene.

MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko accompanied by a team of Dentists and Orthodontists together with the Health Professions Council of South Africa and the South African Dental Association conducted health education and awareness to learners at the school.

"Research has shown that children and young people in poorer communities and remote areas have poor general health and oral health than those in the cities. Currently, over 60% of primary school children in Gauteng suffer from dental caries (tooth decay). More concerning is that over 80% of these children remain untreated for the disease.

"To address the gap and expand access to oral health services, our health professionals regularly visits the public schools to provide comprehensive healthcare services including oral screening of the learners and teachers," said MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko.

The GDoH is broadening access to free oral healthcare service offerings in the province. To date, there are over 108 public dental clinics across five districts, with 27 in Johannesburg, 26 in Tshwane, 28 in Ekurhuleni, 10 in Sedibeng and 17 in the West Rand district. These public health

To address the gap and expand access to oral health services, our health professionals regularly visits the public schools to provide comprehensive healthcare services including oral screening of the learners and teachers

~MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko.

facilities provide essential dental services to the communities and collectively attend to approximately 900,000 patients annually.

This year's theme for World Oral Health Day is "A Happy Mouth, A Happy Body," which emphasises the integral connection between oral health and overall well-being. According to the World Health Organisation, oral diseases pose a major health burden for many countries and affect people throughout their lifetime causing pain, discomfort, disfigurement and even death.

Poor oral hygiene may lead to serious diseases such as oral cancer, dental caries, periodontal disease, HIV-related oral manifestations, malocclusion, orofacial trauma, cleft lip and palate among others. Dental cavities and gum disease are two of the most common oral health issues affecting people worldwide.

In South Africa, gum disease ranks second in terms of prevalence, with an estimated 90% of the population experiencing this problem at some point in their lives. Communities members are therefore urged to prioritise their oral hygiene by visiting their nearest dental clinic for regular check-ups, brushing their teeth regularly, avoiding foods high in carbohydrates and sugar as these can lead to increased tooth decay and cavities. A balanced diet rich in antioxidants, such as fresh fruit and vegetables is also recommended for improved oral health.

Dr in My Classroom back to confront social ills affecting learners

Puseletso Tshetlo

The impactful, Pholosong Hospital's Dr In My Classroom programme has been resuscitated to continue confronting social ills affecting learners in schools across Tsakane, Kwa-Thema and Duduza.

Formerly launched in 2019 and suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the hospital has relaunched the outreach programme in February this year to tackle the high incidences of suicide, teenage pregnancy, bullying substance abuse and create awareness about mental and sexual health.

Through the Dr In My Classroom programme young doctors and health professionals from Pholosong conduct peer to peer conversations with learners to empower and instil confidence in the them, as part of efforts to ensure that they make smart life choices that will impact positively on their lives and studies. The school visits are conducted on Fridays on a weekly basis. Joy Mthethwa, a Life Orientation teacher at Tholulwazi Secondary School in Tsakane applauded the programme for the difference it has makes to learners in surrounding schools.



Ever since the Dr In My Classroom initiative visited our school, pregnancy statistics have drastically dropped. I can truly attribute this to the engagements and confidence you instilled in our learners

~Joy Mthethwa

"Ever since the Dr In My Classroom initiative visited our school, pregnancy statistics have drastically dropped. I can truly attribute this to the engagements and confidence you instilled in our learners," said Mthethwa.

Dr Lerato Makoro, a young Community Service doctor at Pholosong Hospital is part of the programme. It was presented to her in her first year of medical internship and she saw the value in it.

"I always knew that Pholosong Hospital had a soft spot for the population of their surrounding communities. However, it is only after deciding to

join the programme that I only began to appreciate the extent of compassion the facility had towards its people," said Makoro.

In the previous year, the hospital recorded a large number of young people are attempting to end their lives, with over 118 teenagers admitted after suicide attempts between June and August 2023.

Through the Dr In My Classroom programme, the hospital does not only aim to provide health services to the community but also promote healthy and responsible lifestyles through education, preventative programmes and awareness initiatives.

Early diagnosis, treatment and referral for Down Syndrome key

As part of marking World Down Syndrome Day on March 21 the Gauteng Department of Health has advised on the importance of early diagnosis, treatment and referral for Down Syndrome as being key for better outcomes and management of the condition.

Down Syndrome is a genetic disorder that is a result of abnormal cell division resulting in extra genetic material forming on chromosome 21. Children with Down Syndrome may present with a distinct facial appearance, intellectual disability, developmental delays and may have thyroid or heart disease related in some cases.

Early intervention programmes with a team of therapists and special educators who can treat each child's specific situation can help manage Down Syndrome.

To assist children with Down Syndrome to develop skills in self-care, speech and language development, gross and fine motor development, cognitive, intellectual and perception skills, the Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) employs rehabilitation services professionals such as occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech therapists and audiologists, amongst other health professionals, at all health care facilities.

Physical therapy may include activities and exercises that help build gross and fine motor skills, increase muscle strength and or muscle tone, improve posture



and balance. Speech-language therapy improves their communication skills and use of language more effectively, conversation skills, pronunciation skills, etc.

Psychologists provide emotional and behavioural therapies that can be found as useful responses to both desirable and undesirable behaviours, help the child to deal with emotions and build coping and interpersonal skills, help support parents or caregivers of children with Down's Syndrome manage their day-to-day challenges and reach their full potential.

Considering the pivotal role played by education in child development, children with Down Syndrome are referred to the Gauteng Department of Education for appropriate school placement as early as possible to avoid delays in admission and their overall schooling. Parents, guardians or caregivers are supported in various ways including family support visits by social workers, counselling, dietary advice to avoid obesity, education about the condition and how to assist the child develop the skills of daily living they need to survive.

The treatment is based on each individual's physical, developmental and intellectual needs as well as personal strengths and limitations, and structured in such a manner that they can receive care while living at home and in the community. Supportive therapies and interventions may start as early as soon after birth, and continue throughout childhood and adolescence, and proceed throughout life-course depending on the severity or need.

Support groups are available, coordinated and facilitated at government healthcare facilities to provide support to families, carers and children living with Down Syndrome. There are community-led and organised support groups that help augment the work of healthcare facilities or extend to areas experiencing access challenges.

Some children may be issued with assistive devices that enhance learning or make tasks easier to complete such as hearing aids, touch screen computers or computers with large letter keyboards. About 18% of the patients' headcounts from the rehabilitation departments (physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and audiology) in Gauteng are children under the age of 5 years. These are the children presenting with various medical conditions, including Down Syndrome.

Despite all these services, persons with Down Syndrome continue to face a myriad of challenges from universal access to healthcare, education, social inclusion to barriers related to economic participation. However, while we acknowledge the department's early life programmes in the identification and response to the health needs of children with Down Syndrome, a lot more needs to be done to support this community along the life course.

As early health and wellness interventions yield fruit, adolescent and adult support initiatives are needed to assist in the development, inclusion and integration of persons with Down Syndrome in broader society. Effective collaboration with non-governmental partners and other departments provides an untapped opportunity for persons with Down Syndrome to live long and thriving lives.



MATTERS TO US!

Bertha Gxowa complimented for being 'home away from home'

Dear Management

My name is Carmen Ceasar. I was admitted on the 17 March 2024 and discharged on the 20 March 2024.

I am thrilled to inform you that the time I spent at Bertha Gxowa Hospital I was treated with the utmost respect, care, love and patience. Nurse Lizzy Nukeri and nurse Moira Harris treated me with the utmost care, I felt like it was my home away from home.

I was so impressed by the way they handled elderly people with love and dignity. I would like to thank them for the amazing work and for putting so much pride into their work. Snr nurse NH Hlengwa is truly God's gift to mankind. She is kind-hearted and a gentle spirit, she is the sweet sense of a mom and gives everyone the feeling to get well faster.

Dr Lephuthing is very transparent. She practiced all the Batho Pele principles, from service standard, to value for money and courtesy. The young Dr N. Mokgatla is very eager to learn she kept on checking everything twice just to be sure. I was very impressed by her willingness to learn.

The love they have for their work goes beyond anything that I could ever say. There is no place that felt more like home than Bertha Gxowa Hospital. The world needs more people like them as they care so deeply for other people, especially the elderly. I received a warm smile and sense of humour from the first moment to the very last. I was not only welcomed warmly but the food was five-star and the cleanliness was spotless.

Bertha Gxowa Hospital is a world class African hospital. May the sweet joy of God's constant presence keep you smiling on this amazing journey called life. Thank you very much for everything.

By Carmen Ceasar, a former patient at Bertha Gxowa Hospital

* 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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BECOME PART OF A PATIENT-CENTRED CLINICIAN-LED, STAKEHOLDER-DRIVEN HEALTHCARE SERVICE

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GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH VACANCIES

Medical Registrar – Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital, Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital And Tambo Memorial Hospital
Session Medical Officer – Kalafong Provincial Tertiary Hospital
Professional Nurse Speciality PnB1 – OHS – Rahima Moosa Mother And Child Hospital
Assistant Manager Nursing Pna 7 (Night Supervisor) – Rahima Moosa Mother And Child Hospital
Staff Nurse – Kopanong Hospital
Occupational Therapist Production – Kopanong Hospital
Diagnostic Radiographer – Kopanong Hospital
Professional Nurse Specialty Grade 1-Pnb1 – Grade 2- Pnb2 (Advanced Midwifery) – Kopanong Hospital
Medical Specialist Fellow In Nephrology – Fixed Two Years Contract – Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital
Clinical Associate – Pretoria West District Hospital
Medical Officer – Pretoria West District Hospital
Medical Officer (Accident & Emergency) – Tambo Memorial Hospital
Medical Officer Grade 1 (Orthopaedic Surgery) – Tambo Memorial Hospital
Diagnostic Radiographer – Sebokeng Hospital
Driver – Far East Rand Hospital
Social Work Manager – Sebokeng Hospital
Administration Clerk – Johannesburg FPS
Staff Nurse – Johannesburg Health District (Abcef Sub-District)
Medical Officer – Johannesburg Health District (Abcef Sub-District)
Medical Officer: General Surgery – Dr. George Mukhari Academic Hospital

Medical Registrar (Paediatric Surgery) – Dr. George Mukhari Academic Hospital
Medical Officer (Anaesthesiology) – Dr. George Mukhari Academic Hospital
Secretary – Gauteng College Of Nursing (Bonalesedi Campus)
Supply Chain Officer – Gauteng College Of Nursing (GCON): SG Lourens Campus
Medical Registrar: Anaesthesiology – Dr. George Mukhari Academic Hospital
Material Recording Clerk (Assets) – Lebone College Of Emergency Care
Material Recording Clerk (Transit) – Lebone College Of Emergency Care
EMS Lecturer Paramedic – Lebone College Of Emergency Care
Medical Officer Paediatrics – Rahima Moosa Mother And Child Hospital, Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital (CHBAH) And Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital
Registrar Paediatrics – Rahima Moosa Mother And Child Hospital, Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital (Chbah), Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital, And Tambo Memorial Hospital.
Operator (Photocopier) – Ann Latsky Campus
Medical Registrar – Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital (Cmjah), Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, Helen Joseph
Chief Dietitian – Dr. George Mukhari Academic Hospital
Medical Specialist: Paediatric Surgery – Dr. George Mukhari Academic Hospital

DON'T BE A VICTIM OF BURSARY SCAMS AND FAKE JOBS ADVERTS!

Individuals looking at applying for government jobs, bursaries and learning opportunities should consider tips below:

- Search for opportunities on verified government platforms including social media platforms, websites and adverts through reliable newspapers, e.g. the Gauteng e-Recruitment System (Professional Job Centre), Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA) vacancy circular.
- Always follow instructions carefully and fill in Z83 with precision.
- Students who want to study towards a Higher Certificate in Emergency Medical Care (one year) or Diploma in Emergency Medical Care (two years) at Legbone College of Emergency Care. For more info visit: <https://lcoec.ac.za>
- Study towards a Diploma in nursing in various specialties including critical care nursing, trauma and emergency nursing, amongst others at the Gauteng College of Nursing. For more info, please call: 011 644 8946



NOTE: Applications should be submitted strictly online at the following E-Recruitment portal:

<https://jobs.gauteng.gov.za/>. No hand delivered, faxed or e-mailed applications will be accepted. NB: For assistance with online applications please e-mail your query to e-recruitment@gauteng.gov.za.