

Hospital on wheels improves access to healthcare for millions since dawn of democracy

The Transnet-Phelophepa Healthcare Train continues to transform the health, quality of life and future hopes for many South African communities.

Since the dawn of democracy, the hospital on wheels has touched the lives of approximately 15 million people. The train has been to most communities with access to functional railroad across the country since 1994.

Since Monday, 09 October 2023, Phelophepa is stationed at the Dube Station in Soweto. Local communities have been able to access the train's on-board health services which include screening for cancer and diabetes, screening and treatment for common illnesses and ailments.

The train's onboard dental clinic also offers oral health, hygiene education, restorative procedures and extractions. It boasts an eye clinic which provides eye examinations and treatment as well as a same-day service for providing prescription spectacles.

The psychology clinic in the train provides individuals with a supportive and confidential environment where they can talk with trained counsellors about everyday challenges as well traumatic experiences. It provides a valuable link to local community psychologists, social workers and other professionals for follow-up assistance.

Soweto residents, especially the elderly, said they could not miss the opportunity to be screened in the famous healthcare hospital on

wheels, as it is an experience of a lifetime and they know that it will have a positive effect on their overall health status.

"As old as I am, I am here to do a pap smear as you can still get cervical cancer when you are a Gogo. The only way we can know that know we are safe is if we continue getting screened for cervical cancer and other diseases so that we can live longer.

"I would like to encourage fellow Sowetans that on this train, you can get comprehensive health services. It does not matter if you have issues with your teeth, legs, eyes or have high blood pressure or diabetes, the many health professionals in the train will assist you," said one jubilant elderly woman.

Phelophepa train also has a registered pharmacy that provides up to schedule 4 medication to patients. The services of the train are free of charge. However, some services such as prescription glasses and medication cost as little as little as R5 to R30 and nothing more.

MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko urged the community of Soweto to take advantage of the opportunity to access healthcare services offered by the train.

"This train boasts the best medical equipment and trained medical professionals. We have also ensured that the our Johannesburg Health District also assists the teams on this

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Gauteng hospitals rendering eye care health service were recognised for having excelled in their work. MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko honoured the facilities during the World Sight Day commemorations on Friday, 13 October 2023 at Mamelodi Regional Hospital.

The facilities were recognised as part of the Floating Provincial Cataract Surgery Marathons ceremony. Their continuous work has seen 11 249 cataract surgeries conducted in the 2022/23 financial year.

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train so that we can attend to the long queues of people in need of health services offered on on train," said MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko.

In addition, the MEC together with the City of Johannesburg Mayor, Kabelo Gwamanda and MMC for Health and Social Development, Cllr Ennie Makhafola-Ramadimetja handed over assistive devices such as wheelchairs and walking aids to the elderly and disabled patients who came to access healthcare services on the train. Some of the patients received dignity packs consisting of bath soap, tooth paste and brushes and washing towels amongst others.

The train will continue to be stationed at the Dube Station until 19 October 2023. The operational days and times are Monday to Friday from 07h30 to 16h00.



More than 23 130 people issued spectacles in Gauteng

Koketso Maraba

The Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) has in the 2022/23 financial year issued spectacles to 19 815 adults and 3 317 children across health facilities in the province.

This was highlighted by MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko during the World Sight Day observations at the Mamelodi Regional Hospital in Tshwane on Friday, 13 October 2023.

Nkomo-Ralehoko said that these numbers show the GDoH’s commitment to improve the

eyesight of many people in the province who are visually impaired to can read any book.

“We are excited to share the extraordinary advances we are making in our collaboration with our partners, including the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), Ruya, and OneSight.

“Together, we have embarked on a mission that resonates deeply with our shared commitment to making a tangible difference to those who need a pair of spectacles to enjoy the gift of sight,” said the MEC.

The One-Sight foundation has established eye clinics that come with state-of-the-art ophthalmology and optometry equipment, while Ruya’s steadfast dedication to children’s eye health has developed initiatives that guarantee school learners visual tools they need for effective education, and the CHAI has shown commitment to advancing eye health.

The MEC said that while the GDoH together with its partners celebrate the milestone, one of the key areas that need to be looked into is the pressing issue of prolonged waiting times for essential spectacles.

“This challenge disproportionately affects individuals who are most at risk, particularly school children and older persons. Their vision forms the bedrock of their daily experiences and yet, due to limited access, many face complications and social barriers that impact their overall well-being.

“For school children, the ability to see clearly in the classroom is not just a convenience, but an absolute necessity for their educational journey. Similarly, for our older generation, the gift of clear vision is paramount for their quality of life. Whether it’s reading a cherished book, like the Bible, or relishing precious moments with their grandchildren, vision plays an irreplaceable role,” said MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko.

World Sight Day is observed annually on the second Thursday of October to raise awareness and draw attention on blindness and visual impairment. This year, it was observed under the theme “Love Your Eyes at Work”, to remind employees and communities that our dedication to our work should not come at the expense of our eye health.

Alexandra CHC refurbishment underway to improve patient experience of care

Koketso Maraba

Refurbishments to improve the Casualty Ward, Accident and Emergency Unit, Rehabilitation Centre and ablution system at the Alexandra Community Healthcare Centre (CHC) are underway.

Sections within the clinic are currently being worked on to give the rooms a fresh look and new equipment will be installed to give the medical professionals advanced tools to diagnose and treat patients. The CHC is also getting new plumbing system installed for its ablution facilities.

Ennie Masupa, Alexandra CHC manager said that the Casualty Ward and the Accident and Emergency unit at the facility were dilapidated. The log-awaited refurbishments will result in a better-looking, therapeutic working space for staff and welcoming environment for patients.

“Once the renovations are complete and the new equipment has been brought to the facility,



we will be able to provide better healthcare to patients of Alexandra and surrounding areas who access 24-hour services here,” said Masupa.

MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko said that the Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) is prioritising the capacitation of CHCs and clinics in the province to ensure that primary healthcare facilities provide quality services to patient in townships, informal settlements and hostels.

“In order for us to achieve this, we need to ensure that all aspects in our primary healthcare facilities are up to standard. We must ensure that our patients receive healthcare services in a safe and conducive environment. We want our patients to instinctively go to a clinic when they need medical assistance,” said the MEC.

In addition, the Road Accident Fund (RAF) through the South African Medical and Education Foundation (SAME) has also committed to assisting the clinic with refurbishments to ensure that the end users are well taken care of.

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~ MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko

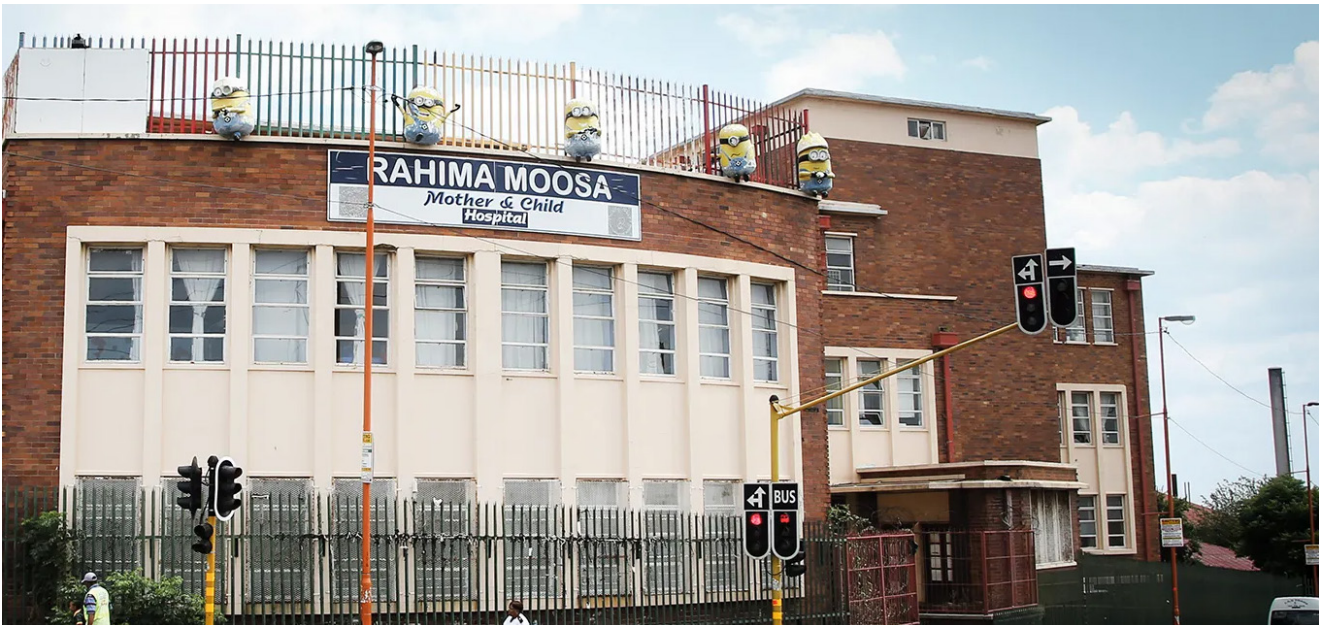
The refurbishments at the CHC are expected to be completed by the end of this year.

Meanwhile, through the Department of e-Government, Wi-Fi will be installed at the CHC so that patients can have access to connectivity while visiting the facility for healthcare services.

Gauteng Health remains committed to paying its municipal bills

The Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) has set the record straight on the Helen Joseph Hospital and Rahima Moosa Mother and Child Hospital electricity accounts following allegations that the two facilities owed City Power R32 million for services.

According to the department’s records, Helen Joseph does not owe City Power the stated amount of R23.4 million. There is, however, one invoice that is outstanding for the month of June 2023 which City Power is yet to upload on to the e-invoicing portal, while Rahima Moosa’s debt of R2.7 million from July to August 2023 is currently being processed.



The management of the two facilities met with City Power officials on Thursday, 12 October, to present their case only to find out that there is a discrepancy on what is alleged to be owed and the current balance does not warrant power disconnection. As it stands, both hospital’s electricity billing is in a healthy state.

There has never been a time where the GDoH has avoided paying municipalities for services

rendered. The Department understands the importance settling its debt to enable municipalities to continue with service provision and for the Department to maintain uninterrupted health services to communities.


Weekly regular meetings and follow-ups are held with local authorities to resolve any billing issues to avoid unnecessary delays in payments due to late submission of invoices, disputes due to incorrect billing and duplicated submissions.



HAND HYGIENE

Taking a few moments for handwashing is a small investment with a big payoff for your health and prevention of diseases.

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Report bogus and unregistered health professionals with the HPCSA

The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) has encouraged the public to report bogus and unregistered healthcare practitioners as it continues with its efforts to bring the perpetrators to book.

This call comes amidst the rise of unscrupulous individuals masquerading as health practitioners on social media platforms, misleading their followers and the public to believe that they are the real deal.

The HPCSA is a statutory body established under the Health Professions Act, 56 of 1974

and is committed to protecting the public and guiding the health professions. The mission of the HPCSA is quality and equitable healthcare for all.

This week, two bogus health practitioners have been exposed after assuming pseudo medical roles. One is the so called ‘Dr Matthew Lani’ who pretended to be in the employ of Helen Joseph Hospital where he moved around the hospital corridors curating content for social media, while “Nthabiseng Ramokolo” has been exposed for falsely claiming to be a pharmacist and having studied at the University of Limpopo.

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Such individuals do not only undermine the integrity of the healthcare system but also pose a significant risk to the wellbeing of the public with their uninformed health diagnosis on various health issues.

Members of the public can report any suspicious behaviour or individuals through the HPCSA website on www.hpcs.co.za or email on Inspectorateoffice@hpcs.co.za for its Inspectorate Office to investigate. Alternatively, they can verify a practitioner’s status by calling the HPCSA Call Centre on 012 338 9300/1.

The GDoH has opened a case of impersonating a medical doctor at the Brixton Police Station in Brixton, Johannesburg against Lani. The Department has conceded that the recent incident has highlighted the urgent need to strengthen access control across all our facilities and to improve employee identification processes.

Meanwhile, the HPCSA in June 2023 reported that it has clamped down on several healthcare practitioners for operating illegally, with four bogus healthcare practitioners arrested this year alone and 124 within a three year period.

WHO reviews South Africa’s Malaria control at Leratong Hospital

Matlhatsi Dibakwane

The World Health Organization (WHO) has selected Leratong Hospital as one of the key facilities for evaluation of South Africa’s Malaria control programme.

This assessment presents a positive opportunity for South Africa to strengthen its Malaria control efforts and make progress towards a malaria-free future.

Malaria continues to be a public health concern in the country. According to recent statistics, South Africa reports between 10 000 to 30 000 notified cases of malaria per year. This has put a strain on public health institutions, particularly in areas where the transmission is likely to be high such as Gauteng, due to the number of people traveling from endemic areas into the province.

The assessment aims to enhance the programme’s effectiveness and influence intervention programmes over the next five years. Dr James Otieno, the Kenya WHO Lead, and representatives from the Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) shed light on the objectives, challenges and potential impact of this evaluation.

The assessment’s primary objective was to work towards a malaria-free South Africa by increasing the percentage of cases receiving appropriate antimalarial treatment, ensuring that intervention coverage exceeds 90%, and implementing effective health education strategies to control and eliminate malaria.

The evaluation focused on several key aspects of Leratong Hospital’s management of malaria cases, including notification procedures, surveillance, health promotion, and adherence to guidelines. It also explored how Leratong Hospital collaborates with the national malaria programme in terms of surveillance and case management, as well as the role of laboratory services in supporting malaria control.

Refilwe Mokgetle, Director for Public Health at the GDoH highlighted the significance of Leratong Hospital participating in the Malaria control programme within the Gauteng province.

“Leratong Hospital has been chosen due to its expertise in managing a high number of malaria cases, particularly in conducting death audits. The GDoH views the facility as a benchmark for other districts



in terms of implementing a multisectoral approach to auditing malaria deaths.

“We are working closely with the hospital to address and manage malaria cases in the region, including improving surveillance, health promotion, and adherence to guidelines,” said Mokgetle, adding that the department will also look at resource allocation to the institution.

During the assessment, Dr Otieno highlighted the issue of imported malaria cases, which contribute to the overall malaria burden in South Africa. Cross-border malaria in specific regions near borders has also been identified as a significant challenge. Furthermore, the financing of the malaria control programme requires increased government investment in the upcoming strategic plan.

According to Dr Otieno, the assessment conducted by the WHO, National Department of Health and GDoH will help South Africa to improve its malaria control programme.

“With Leratong Hospital as a leading example, the evaluation will provide insights and recommendations that will be instrumental in developing a more effective strategic plan for the next five years. By addressing the identified challenges and building upon the strengths, South Africa can further reduce the burden of malaria and work towards its ultimate elimination,” concluded Dr Otieno.

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Gertrude overcomes breast cancer and delivers a healthy baby



Rudzani Matshili

Gertrude Mayo’s journey is one of survival, hope and unwavering determination as she battled breast cancer while carrying a precious life within her.

In 2017, the 43-year-old received a life-changing diagnosis of breast cancer. Her journey began in late December 2016 when she discovered a lump in her right breast. Without hesitation, she promptly sought medical attention to ensure her health and well-being.

“I discovered a lump on my right breast, but it was not painful. I went to the clinic the following morning and was later referred to Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital, where I received my diagnosis following a mammogram. It revealed the presence of four lumps, which led to my immediate chemotherapy treatment,” she said.

As if the diagnosis itself wasn’t overwhelming enough, Mayo faced an additional challenge when she learned that she was pregnant, already two rounds into her chemotherapy treatment. Her doctor had to pause the treatment to ensure the safety of her unborn child.

With her pregnancy progressing, she had to undergo mastectomy, the surgical removal of her right breast.

“The journey required a lot of strength, support and faith which I was getting from my family and friends. Acceptance really helped me as well. I was booked for surgery at six months pregnant and everything went well. As I continued with my regular antenatal check-ups, I had to undergo an emergency C-section while seven months pregnant.

“After giving birth, I went back to chemotherapy as I had four doses left. I was subsequently booked for radiation which meant I needed to be in the hospital for five weeks, but I would go home on weekends to see my baby. I am grateful to be alive because many people don’t even complete the treatment as they pass on along the way,” Mayo said.

Due to Moyo’s mastectomy surgery and undergoing chemotherapy, her premature baby could not be breastfed. However, the Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital’s Milk Bank was able to ensure that the bundle of joy is fully nourished with breast milk donate by other breastfeeding mothers.

Today, the mother of two is not just a breast cancer survivor but also a passionate advocate for breast cancer awareness. She actively shares her story to inspire others, raise awareness about the importance of early detection and support women who find themselves facing the daunting diagnosis of breast cancer during pregnancy.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an opportunity to raise awareness about the disease where abnormal breast cells grow out of control and form tumours. If left unchecked, the tumours can spread throughout the body and become fatal.



Heidelberg hospital staff appreciated

Sanibonani, dumelang.

I was admitted at Heidelberg Hospital. The staff at the hospital was very friendly, from the Casualty Ward where I was attended to by Sr Madonsela to the entire stuff of Ward 2.

Kodwa ngindlulisa ukubonga okukhulu to th porters, especially the female porter namei Kamohelo. That lady gave me a very warm smil and was very patient with us and the patient who needed assistance at the hospital. I would like to encourage them to keep up the goo work, they should know that their work is reall appreciated.

Posted by an anonymous patient on the “DAMN RYT ng’buye RATANDA” Facebook group.



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

- 0800 203 886 (Toll free number)
- patients.health@gauteng.gov.za or support@gauteng.gov.za
- SMS : 35023

* Letter grammatically edited

For letters, contribution and suggestion contact GDoHstories@gauteng.gov.za
For more information on Gauteng Department of Health programmes, News and other information,visit our social media pages:



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