

NEWS BULLETIN

Official Newsletter of the Gauteng Department of Health

19 November 2023



3 Bara gets a new 21-bed psychiatric admission ward



4 Ayihlome prayer walk tackles social ills



5 Communities encouraged to embrace an active lifestyle to fight Diabetes and other NCDs



We have the responsibility to restore our healthcare system to its former glory and reaffirm our commitment to provide quality services to our residents. The launch of this campaign demonstrates our dedication to improve the patient experience of care in our hospitals, clinics and community health centres across the province.
- MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko

Changing the face of public health one smile at a time

The negative attitude portrayed by healthcare workers towards patients, their families and the general public has for many years been identified as one of the significant factors that contribute to putting the public healthcare system under scrutiny.

In an effort to change the status-quo, the Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) on Friday, 17 November, launched the I Serve With a Smile campaign - a movement 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 said that the initiative is aimed at improving patient experience of care and restoring the once-renowned reputation of our healthcare system.

"As healthcare workers, each one of us has the



responsibility to create an environment where patients feel valued, respected, and supported whenever they visit our facilities. "Through this campaign, which is built upon the principles of Batho Pele, we want to create a culture of empathy and compassion that permeates every aspect of our healthcare delivery," said the MEC.

Thousands of healthcare workers from institutions across the five health districts attended the official launch of the campaign, held at Rhema Bible Church in Randburg, to embrace the movement and pledge to approach their work with a smile, enthusiasm, empathy, and a friendly demeanour.

Results from surveys conducted in the second quarter of the 2023/24 financial year, show that GDoH health facilities recorded around 748 complaints from patients, their families and the public, which is a concerning increase from the 640 complaints processed in the first quarter.

However, as much as there is an increase in complaints, the results on contributing factors show a decrease in negative staff attitude from 34% to 31% and patient factors from 44% to 36%. Other noted contributory factors were related to access to information at 20% and waiting times at 19% respectively.

MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko said that it was time for the GDoH to address the challenges head-on and reclaim its position as a leader



As the world observed World Diabetes Day on 14 November, the Gauteng Department of Health joined the global movement to switch on blue lights at its facilities to symbolise the commitment to raise awareness about diabetes and highlight the importance of prevention, management and support for those affected by diabetes.

[#BlueLightForDiabetes](#) [#AsibeHealthyGP](#)

in healthcare provision in the public sector.

"We have the responsibility to restore our healthcare system to its former glory and reaffirm our commitment to provide quality services to our residents. The launch of this campaign demonstrates our dedication to improve the patient experience of care in our hospitals, clinics and community health centres across the province.

"The I Serve with A Smile campaign is an intervention to address staff attitude as well as bolster morale among healthcare workers and ultimately reduce patient dissatisfaction

➔ ...Continued on page 2



and complaints. Through this initiative, we want to emphasise the crucial role that a smile can play in healthcare delivery," said the MEC.

Already, the majority of GDoH facilities including hospitals and community health centres have been onboarded and have joined the movement that serves as a reminder to healthcare workers about the oath they took and that at the heart of the health profession is serving and caring for patients.

Zamile Nduna, a cleaner at Tembisa Hospital who was among thousands of GDoH employees who pledged to serve with a smile said that he was going to lead by example and champion the campaign.

"A smile comes from the heart, and we are going to ensure that we alleviate the fear that many patients have towards us as people who work in health facilities and ensure that we

provide services with a smile to those accessing healthcare in our hospitals," committed Nduna.

HOW TO LODGE A COMPLAINT

Health facilities conduct a Daily Patient Opinion Survey (DPOS) which is a Patient Satisfaction Survey that is to be done daily to encouraging patients to express their opinion with regards to their experiences while admitted at / or visiting the hospital / clinic. The regular insights obtained from this survey assist in improving patients' experience, and assists in identifying and resolving complaints and concerns promptly at the source.

It is important that patients, their families and the public express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the quality of healthcare services received. This can be done through the complaints process to assist the Gauteng Department of Health to reflect and improve

the provision of quality healthcare and patient experience of care to Gauteng residents.

All health establishments in the province have Complaints or Quality Assurance units and Facility Managers to whom complaints can be lodged. The managers' contact details are usually displayed on the notice boards where they are accessible to the public and patients. There are also complaints boxes in all service areas where complaints, compliments and suggestions can be dropped in.

Complaints can also be lodged through contacting the GDoH's Quality Assurance Directorate on 0800 203 886 or Email: patientcomplaints.health@gauteng.gov.za or SMS: 35025.



Over 15 000 people appointed in the 2023/24 financial year

The Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) has in the 2023/24 financial year employed over 15 000 people including admin staff, allied professionals and support staff, clinical, engineering and nursing professionals, amongst other disciplines including appointments at senior management levels.

This was revealed by MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko on Friday, 17 November, during the launch of the "I Serve With a Smile" campaign which included the unveiling of an Impact Career Fair programme which seeks to address skills development gaps especially at an entry level.

The MEC said that due to staff shortages in certain areas healthcare workers may sometimes experience increased workload which can lead to fatigue, burnout, and a sense

of being overwhelmed, ultimately affecting morale.

"We are aware that the shortage or insufficient number of staff in our healthcare facilities can significantly contribute to low staff morale in several ways.

"To address this challenge, we have embraced the Gauteng Provincial Government's 'Nasi iSpani' programme aimed at addressing unemployment and promoting access to job opportunities available within the Provincial Government," said the MEC.

Just over 1000 of the employees were appointed between August and October 2023 into permanent roles. Twenty-five employees were symbolically handed appointment letters on Friday as part of the Nasi iSpani campaign.

"Already, we have signed a five-year agreement with the South West Gauteng College to provide support for the upskilling of the EPWP cohort and many other workers. Through this partnership, EPWP beneficiaries will be placed on the short but highly impactful training programmes focused on Information Communication Technology, Finance and Computer Repairing amongst others."

In addition, MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko announced that GDoH is currently in the process of signing agreements with tertiary institutions to equip EPWP beneficiaries and all other low-skilled employees with the necessary skills for sustainable employability.

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"These partnerships will ensure the re-skilling, upskilling and build capacity as part of the creation of a talent pipeline and entrepreneurial skills (job creator vs job seeker)," said the MEC. The intervention by the Department was welcomed by many employees especially those in the EPWP saying that they are ready to take up opportunities to improve their skills as this will give them an advantage when work opportunities arise within the department.

Bara gets a new 21-bed psychiatric admission ward

Mental healthcare users awaiting admission at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital (CHBAH) will no longer find themselves overcrowding the facility's Accident and Emergency department due to lack of a dedicated ward to accommodate their needs. The hospital now boasts a new 21-bedded Psychiatric Admission Ward.

On Friday (17 November), the MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko together with the CEO of the Islamic Relief Fund South Africa, Mr Yusuf Mohamed officially opened the ward.

This is part of a significant effort to enhance resources for mental healthcare rehabilitation and will ensure that mental healthcare users are admitted in a space that respects and maintains their dignity.

An unused building was identified for the construction of a new ward in 2020 during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, funding had to first be sourced to turn the structure into an appropriate ward.

Fortunately, through a generous partnership with the Islamic Relief Fund, which invested over R3.6 million in 2021 to refurbish and repurpose the old building, CHBAH now proudly houses a fully functional Psychiatric Admission Ward. The

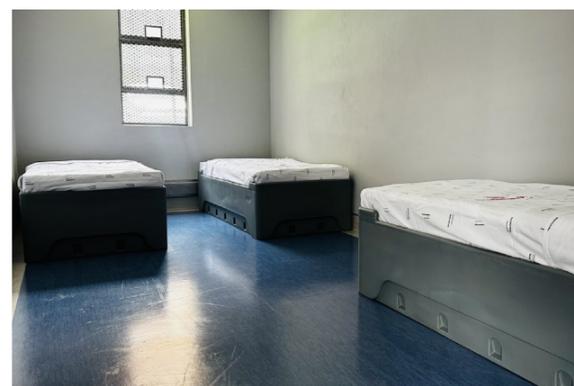


additional bed capacity is expected to provide immense relief to the hospital as it continues to cater to the growing number of individuals presenting with mental health disorders in Soweto and surrounding areas.

The newly established ward is a testament to the commitment of the Gauteng Department of Health to address the pressing needs of individuals grappling with mental health disorders by improving mental healthcare facilities in the province.

The ward has been thoughtfully designed to cater specifically to the needs of psychiatric patients, with a focus on privacy, comfort, and therapeutic support. It is equipped with modern amenities, including specialised treatment rooms and common areas for group activities and counselling sessions.

MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko expressed her gratitude to the Islamic Relief Fund for their invaluable contribution to the project. She emphasised the importance of collaborative efforts in improving mental healthcare and reaffirmed the department's



commitment to further developing mental health facilities in the province.

Meanwhile, a number of public hospitals in Gauteng have already been refurbished while others are undergoing refurbishment to ensure an addition of 206 acute mental health beds by the end of the 2023/24 financial year. These includes Bertha Gxowa, South Rand, Tshwane District, Tembisa, Edenvale and Dr George Mukhari. The additional bed capacity will increase the number of acute mental health beds in the province to 2102.

Improved accident and emergency unit and rehabilitation centre for Alex CHC

Koketso Maraba

The Community of Alexandra will once again have access to 24-hour accident and emergency services which are linked to adequate therapeutic services following the reopening of the Alexandra Community Health Centre (CHC)'s refurbished Accident and Emergency Unit and the Rehabilitation Centre.

The opening of the units on Friday (17 November) will go a long way in ensuring that the facility is able to respond to the burden of trauma cases that were becoming increasingly difficult to manage given the state of the infrastructure.

The refurbishments in the Accident and Emergency unit included the replacement of the damaged ceiling, newly installed lighting, bathrooms, and sanitation equipment, new hygienic flooring (homogenous vinyl sheeting) and building alterations to enhance services and safety.

The Therapeutic Services Centre at the CHC also had its entire roof replaced, all the internal and external walls, doors, and trims were painted. Also, the staff received a newly built nurses' station, an overflow waiting area outside including installed artificial grass, and a new play/therapeutic area in the courtyard.



Patients receiving services here, can be assured that they will receive the best care from the dedicated team of healthcare professionals"
~Mr Magoro.

Representing the department at the opening ceremony, Gauteng Department of Health's acting Chief Operations Officer, Mr Terrance Magoro said the newly refurbished units with lifesaving state-of-the-art medical equipment does not only offer better-looking, therapeutic working space for staff but also offers a welcoming environment for patients presenting at the facility.

"Patients receiving services here, can be assured that they will receive the best care from the dedicated team of healthcare professionals," said Magoro.

Collins Letsoalo, Chief Executive Officer of RAF said that the rehabilitation is an important part of an injured claimant's recovery journey.

"Our objective is to make sustainable contributions towards initiatives that improve an injured claimant's physical ability. We are also committed to re-integrating people with disabilities into social, economic, and environmental normality through other sustainable CSR projects in support of our rehabilitation strategy," said Letsoalo.

The Alexandra CHC was built in the early 1980s and operated as the then Masakhane Clinic before being taken over by government and it became known as the Alexandra Community Health Centre.

The refurbishments could not have been accelerated without the generous donation by the National Department of Transport through its agency the Road Accident Fund and the South African Medical and Education Foundation. During Mandela Day 2023, the Road Accident Fund visited the facility where they identified the need to intervene to improve services at the CHC and thus increase access to quality healthcare services.

Kangaroo mother care crucial for premature babies

Mothers have been urged to use the Kangaroo mother care method as it results in the best outcomes in the growth and development of low-birth weight and premature babies.

This was during the observation of World Prematurity Awareness Day on Friday (17 November) at Bertha Gxowa Hospital.

Gauteng MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko who joined the facility in marking this day said that the method which involves skin-to-skin contact between mothers and their premature babies combined with exclusive breastfeeding is crucial for premature babies as it can result in early discharge at hospitals.

"We have Kangaroo mother care across our hospitals to ensure that mothers of premature babies are able to bond and play a role in the growth and development of their bundles of joy.

"I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of our nurses and doctors for the extraordinary work they do in ensuring



Source: Unicef

that premature babies get the strength needed before they can go home," said MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko.

The MEC also expressed gratitude towards the staff working at the Bertha Gxowa Hospital Kangaroo mother care unit. "You are the embodiment of Mama Bertha Gxowa's legacy of compassion and care. Your dedication to the well-being of our premature babies is an inspiration to us all."

Sister Millicent Zantsi, operational manager at Bertha Gxowa Hospital's Neonatal Ward said that this year's World Prematurity Day observation is in line with the theme "Small Actions, BIG IMPACT: Immediate Skin-to-Skin Care for Every Baby Everywhere".

"Skin-to-skin care is a simple yet powerful intervention that has been shown to have

numerous benefits for premature babies, including improved temperature regulation, heart rate and breathing, and weight gain," said Sr Zantsi.

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~ Sr Zantsi.



Ayihlome prayer walk tackles social ills

Koketso Maraba

As part of build-up activities to the 16th Crown Gospel Music Awards, church members from various denominations led by religious and community leaders, government representatives and organisers of the awards, on Saturday took part in the Ayihlome Prayer Walk. This was to unite in prayer against a plethora of social ills affecting society.

MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko, in her capacity is the convenor of Faith-Based Organisations (FBO) in the Gauteng Provincial Government also took part in the prayer walk.

"The Prayer Walk forms part of the government's efforts engage directly with communities to join efforts in the fight

against social ills such as substance abuse, poverty, teenage pregnancy.

"As a Department, we have also seized this opportunity to make health services available and accessible to people in vulnerable communities. This plays an important part in the early detection of Non-Communicable Diseases which reduces the effects of long-term illnesses," said the MEC.

She emphasised the strategic role played by the FBO sector as churches and other similar institutions are located within communities and usually, they are the first point of call when people are in distress form drug addiction, poverty, homelessness, family disintegration, bullying, racism, delinquency, and discrimination.

Zanele Mbokazi the Founder and Executive Producer of the Crown Gospel Music Awards said that collaborating with government in prayer and worship is another way for the wards to contribute towards social cohesion.

"While ensuring that communities have access to healthcare services, such as screenings for chronic diseases, mental health education and health awareness campaigns, this collaboration is also assisting us in re-engineering society's moral fibre to bring back the concept of ubuntu," said Mbokazi.

The 16th Crown Gospel Music Awards which will this year be hosted in Gauteng will take place on Sunday, 26 November 2023 at Orlando Stadium in Soweto.



Communities encouraged to embrace an active lifestyle to fight Diabetes and other NCDs

Diabetes, and other non-communicable diseases (NCD) such as heart-disease, stroke & cancer, collectively contribute up to 74% of all deaths world-wide according to the World Health Organisation. Yet, almost half of those affected by such diseases do not know their status and as such cannot take appropriate action to manage their situation.

The need for continuous public awareness campaigns remains even more urgent. This past week, the Gauteng and North West provincial departments of health together with the National Department of Health came together under the banner of health and wellness to raise awareness on World Diabetes Day and encourage communities to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyle habits to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes and its complications, and its complications.

The focus for this year's World Diabetes Day campaign is on delaying or preventing type 2 diabetes and any diabetes-related complication with the sub-theme of "Know your risk, Know your response".

Communities were urged to visit their nearest public health facilities for regular health screening in order to know their risk which is a pertinent step to knowing their response.

MEC of Health and Wellness, Nomantu Noko-Ralehoko said, "preventing type 2 diabetes is within our reach. I encourage every person to make exercise a daily habit, eat healthy balanced and maintain healthy weight to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes and many other Non-Communicable Diseases. By adopting an active lifestyle, we can delay or even prevent the onset of this condition"

The World Diabetes Day commemoration kickstarted with a 40-kilometer inter-provincial cycling challenge, a 5km walk and aerobics. Cyclists from Gauteng and North West came together to pedal for diabetes awareness and motivate others to engage in physical activities such as walking and running.

The cycling challenge aligned with the #AsibeHealthyGp programme of the Gauteng

Department of Health which is about mobilising sectors of society and the public in general towards embracing healthy lifestyle as a cornerstone to improving health outcomes.

During his remarks, the Deputy Minister of Health Dr. Sibongiseni Dhlomo said, "exercising plays a vital role in maintaining a healthy lifestyle and managing diabetes. It helps to control blood sugar levels, improve cardiovascular health, and enhance overall well-being. We must at all times incorporate these physical activities in our programmes to highlight the significance of regular exercise in promoting overall well-being".

In closing, the North West Health MEC Madoda Sambatha pleaded with and challenged community leaders to create activities of this nature and mobilise community members to participate as a way of encouraging them to exercise. "Let us take a stand together in solidarity against diabetes and other non-communicable diseases. Together, we can make a difference by encouraging healthy lifestyles".



MATTERS TO US!

I would like to express my appreciation for the exceptional service provided by the following staff members at Bertha Gxowa Hospital:

- 1) Sr. Colleen Watridge
- 2) Mr. L. Chelepe
- 3) Ms. Dimakatso Fayindlala

They have consistently gone above and beyond their duties to assist me on numerous occasions during my visits to the hospital.

However, during my recent visit to your hospital on 25/07/2023 (my original appointment was scheduled for 24/07/2023, but I couldn't make it due to transportation issues), I was unable to see the doctors in your MOPD department. Instead, I had to see a doctor on the ground floor where they check vitals. And the staff members I have mentioned were extremely helpful and made my visit much easier.

I have been experiencing seizures again since December 2022 and the doctors in your MOPD have been working diligently to adjust my medication dosage in an effort to control the seizures. During my visit to the hospital on 29/05/2023, the doctor I saw prescribed new medication which has shown promising results in managing the seizures.

Yours Sincerely, Mrs. H. B. McCrudden

* 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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