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MEDIA STATEMENT

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CHRIS HANI BARAGWANAH HOSPITAL MATERNITY WARD RECORDS NO CASE OF NEGLIGENCE IN THREE YEARS

The Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital (CHBAH) recorded no case of medical negligence in the Neonatal and Maternity Wards in the past three years (2020/21/22), despite having delivered 54 244 babies.

This was revealed by MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko when responding to questions in the Gauteng Provincial Legislature this week.

MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko said that albeit the positive outcome, the CHBAH recorded 1 565 (2.9%) neonatal deaths in the three years under review. However, none of the deaths were due to negligence but other factors such as prematurity (661), infections (547), intrapartum hypoxia (256) and congenital anomalies (118).

Out of these recorded neonatal deaths, 909 were identified to have possible avoidable factors which include inadequate infection control (589), limited neonatal Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds (211), delays in case management (70) and hypothermia (39).

In the three years under review, the CHBAH delivered 1 443 babies with intrapartum hypoxia and 997 with various stages of encephalopathy with 58% (579) having mild encephalopathy, 30% (300) with moderate encephalopathy and 12% (118) with severe encephalopathy.

Babies born with severe encephalopathy will have signs of brain damage in the long term, those with mild encephalopathy are unlikely to have signs of brain damage in the long term, while those with moderate encephalopathy will need follow up as it is difficult to predict who will have brain damage in the long-term.

These are of major concern to the department especially children born with severe encephalopathy as this can develop into a permanent brain

damage situation.

The MEC also indicated that the CHBAH's Neonatal and Maternity Wards have adequate medical and emergency equipment, including four brain cooling machines and is awaiting delivery of three more which have been ordered in the 2022/23 financial year as a top up.

"The CHBAH always ensures that all two obstetric theatres are functional and an additional third theatre is availed and operational after hours," explained MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko.

Currently, there are 652 staff members employed at the CHBAH Neonatal and Maternity Wards with only 34 vacant positions that have already been advertised and the shortlisting process is underway.

"As part of efforts to ensure that the 34 vacant positions do not affect operations at the neonatal and maternity wards, the CHBAH augments staff shortages with both in-house overtime and the use of nursing agency personnel. The hospital also effectively deals with absenteeism in the workplace when encountered," said the MEC.

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For more information please contact:

Motalatale Modiba, Head of Communication: 064 803 0808 or healthmediaenquiries@gauteng.gov.za	Tshepo Shawa, Spokesperson for the MEC for Health: 072 222 6333 or Tshepo.Shawa@gauteng.gov.za
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