

NEWS BULLETIN

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People living with HIV must adhere to their treatment as prescribed to achieve viral suppression in order for the virus to be undetectable in their system. We equally encourage those who are HIV negative to get initiated on Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis to be protected from HIV.”
~Monwabisi Mbsa

Forging strong partnerships for improved response to HIV, TB and STIs

All spheres of government, civil society sectors and the private sector have been urged to strengthen partnerships to ensure improved access to HIV, TB and STI services, especially among the key and priority population within townships, informal settlements and hostel areas.

This was said by MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko when delivering the keynote address on behalf of the Gauteng Premier during the provincial World Aids Day commemoration on Friday, 06 December, at Khutsong Sports Complex in Carletonville, West Rand.

“For the province to achieve the ambitious targets set in the Gauteng Provincial Implementation Plan on HIV, TB and STIs (2023-2028), we need strengthened governance structures, that is, functional AIDS Councils at all levels, Provincial, District and local levels.

“To date, three municipalities (Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and West Rand) have already launched their AIDS Councils led by the Executive Mayors and the Civil Society Forum leadership. Executive Mayors and their Co-chairs from Civil Society need to lead by convening Councils quarterly as part of co-ordinating and monitoring the implementation of the HIV, TB and STI response,” said the MEC.

This year’s event was held under the theme “Equal Rights, Equal Care” reflecting on the progress made in the fight against HIV/AIDS over the past three decades. The programme aimed to honour those affected by the epidemic, promote equal access to healthcare

services, and reinforce the commitment to achieving the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets: ensuring 95% of people living with HIV know their status, 95% of those diagnosed are on antiretroviral treatment (ART), and 95% of those on ART achieve viral suppression.

These targets are crucial milestones in the global effort to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. This is a deadline that has been set by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to achieve universal health coverage and reduce inequalities in health access.

MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko announced during the event that there has also been great strides made in the reduction of new HIV infections. However, new HIV infections remain very high, and the pace of reduction is very slow.

“Gauteng has done remarkably well in surpassing the first 95% target, as 96% of the people living with HIV have tested for HIV and know their status. We have also ensured increased access to testing, treatment, and support services for individuals living with HIV and other key and priority populations,” said the MEC.

The MEC together with civil society leaders, development partners and HIV/AIDS activities lit candles to remember the many lives lost due to the disease. The candle lighting also honours those who dedicated their lives to helping people living with and affected by HIV and continue to mobilise our communities in solidarity.



MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko joined by senior managers in the Gauteng Department of Health hosted winners of the National Batho Pele and Innovation Awards at the Gauteng Provincial Legislature during the Department’s 2023/24 Annual Performance Report debate on Tuesday, 03 December.

[#AsibeHealthyGP](#)

In addition, Monwabisi Mbsa from the Treatment Action Campaign encouraged people who are living with HIV to adhere to their treatment as prescribed to achieve viral suppression in order for the virus to be undetectable in their system.

“We equally encourage those who are HIV negative to get initiated on Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis to be protected from HIV,” said Mbsa, who applauded government for introducing radical changes in HIV prevention and treatment.

During the event, the Gauteng Department of Health together with development partners also rendered a number of healthcare services including HIV testing, PrEP initiation, diabetes and high blood screening amongst others

Healthcare workers seek divine intervention as they brace for the festive season



Thuso Montwedi

As we enter the festive season a period historically marked by a surge in emergencies and trauma cases, including those related to gender-based violence, Gauteng's healthcare system braces for its annual challenges.

In response, the Gauteng Department of Health hosted a Festive Prayer for Health Care Workers on Thursday, December 5, at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital. The gathering aimed to seek divine intervention and bolster the spiritual and emotional fortitude of healthcare workers during this demanding period.

Addressing the assembly of healthcare professionals and faith leaders, MEC for Health and Wellness Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko expressed profound gratitude for the firm dedication shown by healthcare workers throughout the year. Reflecting on her presentation of the departmental Annual Performance Report for the 2023/24 financial year before the Gauteng Provincial Legislature on Tuesday, 3 December, she remarked, "I felt immense pride. I proudly shared the story of your dedication, resilience, and sacrifices, which have made Gauteng Health shine in the face of both praise and criticism." The MEC acknowledged the often-thankless nature of healthcare work, noting that while countless lives are

saved daily, recognition is frequently overshadowed by criticism during adverse events. She urged healthcare workers to remain steadfast, emphasising that they should remember the promise in Matthew 6:20: 'But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.' Every good deed, every life saved, and every comforting word spoken is recognised in heaven."

Highlighting the dual burden of physical fatigue and emotional strain that intensifies during the festive season, MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko called for prayers for those traveling to reunite with loved ones and for those remaining on duty. She invoked Isaiah 40:31, stating, "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint."

Gauteng Emergency Medical Services paramedic and Chaplain, David Mtshotwane, welcomed the prayer service saying that given the amount of trauma and emergencies healthcare workers have to respond to, especially during this period, it is important to underplay the value of emotional and spiritual support.

The event also highlighted the alarming rise in gender-based violence during the festive season.

This concern aligns with the ongoing 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children campaign. The previous day, at an event in Kagiso Chief Mogale Hall, MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko addressed this issue, reaffirming the department's commitment to supporting victims and implementing preventive measures.

Recent statistics paint a sobering picture. During the first three weeks of December 2023, South Africa recorded 719 road fatalities, with Gauteng accounting for 187 of these deaths, a 23.8% increase from the previous year (2022).

This surge places additional strain on healthcare facilities, which must manage the influx of accident-related injuries alongside routine medical cases. In her closing remarks, MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko offered festive greetings and a message of hope: "As we celebrate the birth of Christ this festive season, may we be reminded of the values of love, hope, and sacrifice that His life represents. I wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year."

The Festive Prayer for Health Care Workers served as a reminder of the critical role these professionals play, especially during challenging times, and the importance of spiritual and community support in sustaining their invaluable efforts.

Addressing Gender-Based Violence across all genders



Koketso Maraba

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is often seen as a problem affecting only women, but the reality is that it impacts all genders.

This was highlighted at this year's 16 Days of Activism commemoration on Wednesday (4 December) by Gauteng MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko in light of the 2023/2024 statistics that reveal an increased number of male patients that visited the Clinical Forensic Medical Services facility (CMFS) at Leratong Hospital.

During the commemoration, Boitshepo Abè Lesetedi, a male survivor of GBV, shared his personal experience with the community to raise awareness about the real-life impact and signs of abuse. He recalled enduring physical violence from his wife and revealed how he faced starvation within his own home, as he was denied food. He further described the psychological toll of degrading words that were used to manipulate and diminish his sense of self-worth.

Abè Lesetedi encouraged the community to speak out against Gender-Based Violence and report it to their nearest CFMS facility. This is because the facilities are committed to supporting both victims and perpetrators of crime, with a focus on preventing injuries and unnatural deaths.

"We are committed to raising awareness about the reality that GBV affects all genders, and we will continue to challenge the myths that prevent the recognition of male survivors."

Furthermore, they provide medical services to survivors of GBV, including those affected by sexual offenses, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, child abuse, and human trafficking. All 28 facilities in Gauteng conduct medical examinations, offer necessary treatments, and ensure survivors receive comprehensive care.

"We are committed to raising awareness about the reality that GBV affects all genders, and we will continue to challenge the myths that prevent the recognition of male survivors. Our goal is to mobilise action, engage both boys and men in GBV prevention efforts, and ultimately eliminate GBV in our communities," sated MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko.

Additionally, the Gauteng Department of Health is focused on ensuring that victims and survivors know where to turn for support. The Department's CFMS Directorate has been instrumental in raising awareness and implementing educational programs aimed at tackling GBV. These include collaborative efforts with faith-based organisations (FBOs), traditional healers, the LGBTQIA+ community, and schools each of which plays a vital role in breaking the cycle of abuse.

These efforts align with the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence, particularly Pillar Two, which emphasises prevention and the importance of fostering social cohesion.

Investing in productive spaces, corner-to-corner

Koketso Maraba

In many communities, street corners have become symbols of despair, linked to drug use, crime, and risky behaviors. But through the Corner-to-Corner campaign, the Gauteng Department of Health is contributing towards changing that narrative.

On Thursday, 5 December, MEC for Health and Wellness Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko joined the community of George Goch Hostel in Johannesburg as they welcomed services designed to address the health needs of the community.

These services included tests for HIV and pregnancy, X-ray screenings, hypertension and glucose checks, child immunisation, and much more. The transformed “Smart Corners” have become vibrant, accessible hubs where people can access essential health services, career opportunities, and support to help them build better futures. These hubs play a crucial role in meeting the needs of the community, providing vital resources, and empowering individuals to improve their lives.

MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko said that the initiative goes beyond healthcare; it is a collective effort involving multiple stakeholders, each playing a vital role in creating a sustainable and thriving environment for everyone. This includes sister Departments, such as Community Safety, Sport Arts and Culture, working to ensure that these spaces are safe, productive, and welcoming for all.



“This collaborative approach reflects our belief that health and well-being extend far beyond hospitals and clinics. It’s about fostering an environment that nurtures every aspect of life such as physical health, economic opportunity, and personal safety. By addressing all of these areas, we are building communities that not only thrive but also support the long-term prosperity of their residents,” explained MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko.

The transformed “Smart Corners” have become vibrant, accessible hubs where people can access essential health services, career opportunities, and support to help them build better futures.”

Ayanda Makhunga (21), a resident of George Goch, shared that she chose to get the implant for birth control because she already has one child and wants to plan for the next one. This will allow her to focus on building a better future for herself and her family.

Moreover, MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko highlighted that the event was part of the ongoing 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children. In South Africa, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) continues to affect many communities, including hostels.

“The spaces we are creating through this initiative must not only serve as centers for health and opportunity but also as sanctuaries of respect, dignity, and safety for women and children,” said MEC.

MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko urged everyone present to take a stand, emphasising that violence has no place in society. She stated that the vision for transforming these spaces would remain incomplete if women and children continue to live in fear. She called for a commitment to reporting abuse, supporting victims, and fostering a culture of accountability.



Women’s health services taken to informal settlements in Boksburg

Zoliswa Nzeku

The Tambo Memorial Women’s Health and Reproductive Clinic recently embarked on a three-day outreach campaign, bringing essential healthcare services directly to the communities of Angelo, Jerusalem, and Emandleni informal settlements.

This initiative is a key part of the Gauteng Department of Health’s ongoing commitment to improving access to healthcare in Townships, Informal Settlements, and Hostels (TISH). By reaching out to these areas, the campaign aimed to ensure that vulnerable populations receive essential healthcare and resources they need for better health and well-being.

According to statistics from the Hospital’s Women’s Health Clinic, a significant number of patients seeking termination of pregnancy services and treatment for septic abortions come from the Angelo, Jerusalem, and Emandleni areas. This highlighted the urgent need to extend Women’s health services directly to these communities. The outreach campaign offered a range of critical services, including family planning, HIV testing, Pap smears, pregnancy testing, and health education on sexual and reproductive health.

Rethabile Mamashila, a resident of the Jerusalem informal settlement, was one of the individuals who benefited from the women’s healthcare services provided by the clinic. She expressed her gratitude.

“I would like to thank the Tambo Memorial Hospital Women’s Health Clinic for bringing these services to our area. As someone living in a squatter camp, the information I received today is exactly what I wish everyone in this community could have access to everyday, especially family planning. We would love for the clinic to visit us more frequently,” said Mamashila.

The Social Work department partnered with the clinic to further raise awareness about Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in the communities, offering support to victims and directing them to the appropriate departments for further assistance. Mahaditla Hule shared that the education she received has equipped her with knowledge on how to handle GBV challenges. She added that this information will not only help her, but also her neighbours and friends.

The clinic is working on collaborating with various stakeholders in the Boksburg area to visit all informal settlements at least once a week, offering healthcare services and health education.

Sr. Millicent Rampou from Tambo Memorial Hospital Women’s Health Clinic said that “a significant number of community members responded positively during this outreach, and if we can continue this on a weekly basis, we will be able to help even more people. In this outreach alone, we provided family planning services to 74 women and conducted 64 HIV tests. We are committed to doing even more.”

The outreach was also supported by the Ekurhuleni District Health Services Mother and Child Department, Boksburg South African Police Service and other stakeholders.



Take the right path!

I am taking my HIV treatment every day and exactly as prescribed so that I can reduce the risk of drug resistance and achieve viral suppression.



Gauteng Health Department



@gautenghealth



Gauteng Department of Health



MATTERS TO US!

Cancer patient applauds Bara's oncology unit

Good afternoon,

I would like to thank the staff, nurses, doctors, and patient transport at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital in Soweto. The treatment, care and concern shown towards me during my stay at the oncology unit (Ward H4) was amazing. I thank the Lord for placing these people in my path towards recovery.

Many thanks everyone

Brent Thomas Rath, Cancer patient.

* 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.



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