



PRESS RELEASE

**To: All Media
Att: News Editors
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Gauteng Health takes steps to limit medical negligence in its facilities

Gauteng Health Department has taken strong measures to reduce cases of medical negligence at its facilities and to improve the quality of care.

In a reply to a legislature question, MEC Papo said that department of health has been working around the clock and taking pro-active measures to ensure the reduction of medical negligence cases.

The department has noted that some of the lawyers at the forefront of litigations against the department were operating and making a lot of money within the Road Accident Fund space which has now being closed. These lawyers have now changed their focus to the department.

“Our own experience has also taught us most medico-legal cases emanates from Obstetrics and Gynecologists. In reversing this situation, we have since placed more focused on maternal care because most of the negligence cases occur during child birth. In addition to this, we are also offering ongoing training in all facilities to improve attitudes and communication between staff and patients as well as monitoring and evaluation of all improvement initiatives,” said Gauteng Health MEC, Hope Papo.

In 2012, the department trained 120 nurses in midwifery while other 79 received training in advanced midwifery and neonatology. The training of nurses on neonatal resuscitation was also carried out to improve the survival of babies and prevent injuries.

As part of the concerted efforts to further strengthen and improve the quality of care, in the 2012/2013 financial year, the department trained 188 doctors and 203 nurses to manage obstetric emergencies, in the same year we have also gave our nurses a rigorous training to use early warning charts. Other initiatives included monitoring and evaluation of clinical practice through assessments using National Core Standards; with it, all units in facilities are expected to conduct clinical audits at least once a month and all facilities are expected to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate Quality Improvement Plans based on the gaps identified during investigation of Serious Adverse Events.

MEC Papo has also announced that the department is in the process of establishing a Provincial Multidisciplinary Committee to look at preventative measures of curbing the recurrence of Serious Adverse Events.

“We have noted with concern an increase in the number of Serious Adverse Events that had been recorded. In the year 2012, 373 cases were recorded and between January and September last year, 532 cases were recorded. The majority of these cases were from our central hospitals (Chris Hani Baragwanath 39, Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg 25, Dr George Mukhari 16 and Steve Biko Pretoria 7). This is because of the nature of the services that are provided there, says MEC Papo

These complaints involved amongst others the allegations of negligence; sexual assault; suicide and attempted suicide; skills gap; systems failure and errors.

“All these reported cases are taken seriously and are thoroughly investigated by the department. Upon completion of investigations the normal disciplinary procedures are followed, the department has given some staff members verbal or written warning; counseling; training; suspension without pay and dismissal depending on the outcome of the disciplinary hearing. In the process, we have referred some cases to the South African Police Service as well as other statutory bodies for further investigation and recommendations,” says MEC Papo.

The department has begun the process of reviewing the midwifery practice standards to prevent further litigations and we are doing everything in our powers to ensure that all public health facility users are not injured or harmed through the negligence of our staff” concluded the MEC

Ends

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