



**GAUTENG PROVINCE**  
HEALTH  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Address by MEC Dr. Bandile Masuku on the occasion of the World Cancer Day, Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital, 04 February 2020**

**Programme Director**

**Senior Management and Staff of the Gauteng Department of Health**

**Partners of the Department – Pink Drive, CHOC Childhood Cancer Foundation, Lancet Laboratories, PEPFAR**

**Members of the Community**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good Morning,

The 4<sup>th</sup> of February is an important day in the global health calendar because it is the day where we as the health community and members of society in general can rally our efforts towards the call to end the injustice of preventable suffering from cancer. As lead by the Union for International Cancer Control's (UICC), this year's theme is **"I can, we can"** – an acknowledgement that everyone has the capacity, and

responsibility to addressing the cancer burden. This theme reminds us that working together we can reduce cancer risk factors, we can overcome barriers to early diagnosis, treatment and palliative care. It reminds us that we can work together to improve cancer control and achieve global targets to reduce premature mortality from cancer and Non-Communicable Diseases.

As we observe World Cancer Day today, let us begin by remembering those that have fought the battle against cancer, as well as the families who have had to go through the process of seeing those that they love lose this battle; however let us not end there. Let us further take a moment to think about those who have fought and won the battle against cancer, let us acknowledge the support of the families, health practitioners and the communities that encouraged, operated and believed that cancer can be defeated and that it does not always have to have the final say.

While cancer statistics say that **17 people die every minute from cancer around the world, it is important to also know that between 30-50% of all cancer cases are preventable.**

Approximately one third of cancer deaths are linked to the five leading behavioural and dietary risks which are - obesity, low fruit & vegetable intake, lack of physical activity, tobacco and alcohol use. The use of tobacco is the most important risk factor for cancer and is responsible for approximately 22% of cancer deaths globally. Cancer causing infections, such as hepatitis and human papilloma virus (HPV), are responsible for up to 25% of cancer cases in low- and middle-income countries.

It is therefore important to understand that changing our lifestyles and opting for better and healthier living plays an important role in preventing cancers. **Prevention is also the most cost-effective long-term strategy for the control of cancer**, cancer treatment is expensive and therefore not easily accessible to many. As a Department we have in place some preventative interventions to address the prevalence of cancer in our communities.

One such intervention is providing the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine in all health districts to protect the targeted grade 4 Girls against cervical cancer in future. In this financial year over 80 000 schoolgirls over the age of nine-years have received first doses of this vaccine, and over 61 000 learners having received the second dose of the HPV vaccine.

The Department is also continuing with cervical cancer screening and mammography services across the province. In the previous financial year, we have also given training on the new method of obtaining cervical smear-liquid base cytology (LBC) to reduce the incidence and prevalence of cervical cancer with early diagnosis and enrolment to care and the cervical screening.

In the first three quarters of this financial year we have screened 57,3% of the target which is women over the age of 30. According to the World Health Organisation, breast cancer is the most frequent cancer among women, impacting 2.1 million women each year, causing the greatest number of cancer-related deaths among women. To improve breast cancer outcomes and survival, early detection is critical. I encourage everyone that is here today, to take some time during the activities of the day to do breast and prostate cancer screening that is offered by our partners. Prevention is always better than cure and early detection of ailments goes a long way in improving the quality of life.

While cancer remains the leading cause of deaths globally, there is a rise of NCDs across the African region which is linked to changes in lifestyle and behaviour over the past few decades that needs to be addressed.

Communities must begin to make better decisions about what they eat, prioritise exercise and proactively lead healthier lifestyles. In the year 2020, the Department will be scaling up its healthy lifestyle campaigns, involving communities and the facilities across the province. While efforts will be made to encourage healthy lifestyles, it remains the responsibility of individuals to take charge of their health. Our Community Health Workers and health promoters play an important role in helping us with changing the perceptions of healthy living in our communities, and as the Department we are doing everything that we can to offer support that is required in this regard.

Allow me to take this opportunity to emphasise that the Gauteng Department of Health remains committed to its strategic priorities which include; improving patient's experience of care and clinical services, strengthening governance & leadership, strengthening public health literacy and health promotion and preparing for the implementation of the National Health Insurance.

In line with the improving of patient's experience of care, we launched the Mpilo Application which is available on both android and iOS platforms. This app is aimed at providing information about our facilities in Gauteng,

expressing complaints and compliments of services in our facilities and giving a directory of relevant contacts to in our facilities. It is important for us as a Department to empower society with adequate tools to access healthcare and express themselves about the quality of services that they receive in our facilities. In this regard the Mpilo app offers 'healthcare in your hands', it is a reliable platform for the community to express their thoughts on areas that need improvement in our facilities without compromising patients and healthcare workers. We also encourage users to use this platform to appreciate and complement the Department and its staff on the good work that they do in our facilities.

The Department is also strengthening its interventions to ensuring that by 2024 the HIV/AIDS 90-90-90 objectives are met and that all Community Health Centres offer 24-hours services, these interventions speaking directly to the call for the implementation of the NHI. We believe that the National Health Insurance is the vehicle we as a country will use to bring about equality for all in the health system. The roll-out of the NHI will enable an environment where Non-Communicable Diseases including cancer are controllable, through the prioritisation and strengthening of primary healthcare.

We are determined to improve the quality of healthcare in our province and country. We are even more determined to see a health system that is accessible to everyone irrespective of the socio-economic status that people occupy. In order to ensure that this is a reality, we are relying on members of the community to attend the NHI Bill Public Hearings in numbers, these hearings are offering citizens an opportunity to voice their concerns and comments on the Bill. As leaders of government, we recognise and appreciate the inputs from community members and look forward to constructive inputs regarding this process.

We wish to thank all partners that have made this day a success, we realise that partnerships play a very important role in attaining our health goals as a province. As we move towards the full implementation of the NHI, we believe our partnerships will be strengthened even further, and that together we can build a healthy nation. I once again urge you all to make the most of the screening services available today, in the spirit of “I can, We Can”, let us take charge of our health and our future.

Thank you.