

MEDIA STATEMENT

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ECDoH CLINICIANS MEET TO MAP OUT A WAY FORWARD IN IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH CARE SERVICES

BHISHO - The Eastern Cape Department of Health heads of clinical services are gathered today at the Clinical Governance Seminar in Gqeberha, with the aim of setting a new strategy that will be in line with evolving health as well as current challenges.

Senior doctors, specialists, organised labour, academics, and other stakeholders are set to participate in the three-day seminar, which is set to look at ways to improve the quality of public health care in the Eastern Cape.

The seminar is facilitated by Dr Percy Mahlathi, Deputy Director General in the National Department of Health, and it will focus on contributory factors that are directly derailing provision of efficient health service to the public.

Social factors, such as high levels of statutory rapes which is illustrated by high rate of teenage pregnancies - mainly girls under fifteen years (15) of age have also been flagged as an emergency crisis challenging the Health Department.

Many of these girls are not physically fit to be mothers, and they normally suffer complications during labour. This is an area mainly exploited by lawyers who are sitting on the sides waiting to lodge medico - legal claims when such complications occur.

With this seminar, the department is also aiming to strengthen internal governance systems such as human resources, regulating the issue of allowing state doctors and other health workers to do private work outside government popularly known as (RWOPS, remunerative work outside public service).

This has somewhat been abused as some employees would only work few hours in public hospitals before rushing to their own private practices, leaving long queues in public health facilities.

This conduct has impacted negatively in the department and deprived patients of efficient service. Another area of focus will be the overtime payments to employees, which has also been abused.

To address this, the department plans to fill vacant positions so as to minimise the need for employees to work overtime. Overtime is not a basic condition of right or benefit but rather a contingency plan to close the gap created by staff shortages.

During the first day of the seminar, the issue of accountability and monitoring took center stage at the seminar. The department is also battling medico - legal claims amounting to billions of Rands.

Since 2015, the department has lost R3.7 billion to lawyers and some unscrupulous lawyers, which has impacted negative effects on the ability of the department to fill vacancies.

Special Investigations Unit, Provincial Treasury has since been roped in to recover the lost millions and pursue criminal investigations against those who may have wrongly benefited from public money through misrepresentation and collusion

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