

Department of Health seeks to standardise nursing training

A STANDARDISED nursing sector could be in sight as the Department of Health has launched a strategy to improve monitoring of nursing institutions and new nurses, and do away with "illegal nursing training colleges". Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi told a delegation at the launch of the strategy in Boksburg that a "chief nursing officer" would soon be appointed in his office to deal with nursing in hospitals and to monitor progress of the strategy. Motsoaledi said the shortage of healthcare personnel in South Africa and around the world undermined the performance of the sector. He said nurses of a high calibre were needed to address these challenges. The drive to draw up and enforce best-practice standards nationally comes in response to, among others, the discovery that purported nursing graduates were applying to the Gauteng labour department for jobs. It is believed some were placed in hospitals without proper vetting of their qualifications, which may have come from fly-by-night institutions. Motsoaledi said nursing was a bedside experience and that any training that was theory with no sign of certain practical training was not nursing and should not be accredited. The National Strategic Plan for Nurse Education, Training and Practice was put together after a Nursing Summit in 2011 and deals with matters affecting nursing in South Africa, including accreditation of nursing institutions, new models for clinical education and a national policy for standardisation and funding. "Fly by night" nursing schools or illegal institutions also received harsh words and the department urged the closure of institutions that do not obtain proper accreditation. Chairwoman of the ministerial task team Daisy Mafubelu said a major challenge in nursing institutions included attracting trainees to public hospitals, and retaining experienced nurses and nursing managers with knowledge to impart to entry-level nurses. She said regulations were gazetted last week and stated that, by 2015, all nursing colleges would have to register as higher education and training institutions with the Council of Higher Education. This meant about 300 operational nursing colleges would not only be regulated by the SA Nursing Council, but would also have to meet university standards. The qualifications of teachers and lecturers would be scrutinised. The regulations also include plain white uniforms for hospitals, a recommendation the department also expected private health facilities to adopt. Motsoaledi said he had a meeting at the weekend with incoming Mpumalanga health MEC Candice Mashego-Dlamini, who told him there was a high volume of applications to nursing institutions but most applicants were not adequately qualified.

Khulekani Magubane: Business Day, 12 March 2013

Katharine Child: The Times, 12 March 2013

Vuyo Mkhize: The Cape Times, 12 March 2013