

Matikwane Hospital in Mpumalanga Failing Patients

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The Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration/Monitoring and Evaluation is alarmed by the inexcusable service being rendered by healthcare officials at Matikwane Hospital, in Hazyview, Mpumalanga. The Committee yesterday concluded its two-day visit to Mpumalanga to assess the quality of services rendered to people on a daily basis.

The overall prognosis by the Committee is that officials in many health care facilities do not appreciate the central role they play in ensuring a long and healthy life for all South Africans.

“What disappointed the Committee the most was the lethargic manner with which people are treated at the facility. One elderly patient had reported to the hospital on two consecutive days without getting the much-needed treatment. This is completely unacceptable and must be adequately addressed,” said Dr Makhosi Khoza, the Chairperson of the Committee.

The Committee reiterates its principled stance that in order to achieve the ideals of a professional public service, as captured in the National Development Plan, the culture of laziness must be completely eradicated within the service. To achieve this, proper monitoring and evaluation systems must be put in place by provincial departments, national government, as well as oversight bodies, such as provincial legislatures and Parliament.

“Consequence management must also be used as an effective tool to deal with underperforming officials. It must be clear; if an official underperforms, they must lose their employment,” Dr Khoza said.

The visit to hospitals has also highlighted a worrying trend regarding reporting systems by departments to oversight bodies like Parliament. “The presentations given by officials were starkly different to patients’ everyday experiences. This indicates a need to focus the oversight model on regular engagements with the people rather than on meetings with officials,” Dr Khoza observed.

The piloting of the National Health Insurance (NHI) has as its major aspiration the development of adequate capacity to ensure all South Africans are provided with essential health care, regardless of their employment status and ability to make a direct monetary contribution toward attainment of this service. “The quality of service rendered at Matikwane Hospital and many other similar facilities undermine these well-intended aspirations,” Dr Khoza emphasised.

The Committee is further alarmed by the revelation that the hospital does not have an in-house laundry service. As a consequence, the hospital has a continuous struggle with laundry and the loss of inventory, as linen is shuttled between the hospital and the service provider.

The Committee has highlighted the continuing challenge with the lack of medical record filing systems within South Africa's entire healthcare system. "This has been a recurring challenge, which must be duly resolved by the Minister of Health together with his provincial counterparts. Patients can't wait for files for more than five hours, which is the situation at Matikwane Hospital and many similar facilities," Dr Khoza said.

The lack of proper filing systems has exposed the department to unscrupulous lawyers that are making a living through medical malpractice litigation, as they have easy access to the system.

The Committee has urged the Public Service Commission to play a meaningful role in monitoring the quality of service rendered to people on the ground. The Committee will increase its engagement with the Commission to ensure that it gets first-hand information that will strengthen its oversight role.

ISSUED BY PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION/MONITORING AND EVALUATION, DR MAKHOSI KHOZA