



Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
HEALTH

OFFICE OF THE MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (MEC)

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**MEC HEALTH FOR HEALTH, DR. P.P. DYANTYI | VISIT TO ST KATHERIN'S
PARISH | BERLIN | 16 OCTOBER 2015**

The leadership of St Katherine's Parish;

Reverend BTM Mfenyana;

MamMfundisi Mfenyana;

Church elders;

The Congregation at large;

Health Professionals present;

Invited guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

I greet you all in the wonderful name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ;

Introduction

Programme director firstly I wish to extend my appreciation to the leadership of the church, under Rev. Mfenyana for inviting me to come and contribute to this wonderful occasion. It is an honour for me to be counted amongst the people present here today to make a contribution to the betterment of our people's lives. Our lives are precious and need to be treated and valued as such and hence I am delighted to the opportunity of contributing to other person's wellbeing.

When I am invited to events of this nature I am always delighted at the opportunity of addressing our people on critical issues of health, which affect us on a daily basis. I always make sure that I address attendees on matters of lifestyle and wellness as this is very key to our health. This topic

is important to me because our people are perishing daily as a result of lifestyle illnesses and most importantly due to lack of knowledge. We therefore have an obligation as health professionals, whether in our workplaces or beyond to educate our people about the dangers of these silent killer illnesses as well as best possible ways of averting such illnesses.

I must acknowledge the commendable decision by the church leadership that during this year's St. Luke's commemoration, celebrating the life of a physician you will also make a meaningful contribution to the livelihoods of your congregants through this Health Expo which will empower the congregants about the importance of their health. Reverend Mfenyana and the leadership of the church I think I can give you a guarantee that surely these people gathered here today can attest that they will never be counted amongst those who will perish due to lack of knowledge, as this session will leave them empowered and armed with best advises on how to lead healthy lifestyles.

In recent years nurses and other health professionals such as doctors find themselves working in a seriously strained and fearful environment as a result of criminal elements who have seen a money making opportunity in this field. In recent times, both private and public health have become victims of hefty litigations influenced by greedy lawyers who want to make a quick cash-out. Our professionals work in fear because they do not know if they would be next in line as subjects of litigations. This prayer therefore is important and necessary in their lives in order to restore their faith and passion for their professions.

Having said that I am by no means implying that in incidents of litigation professionals are always victims, there are cases of legitimate human error as well as pure negligence from others. For those who are acting negligible and ill-treating our patients, we need a serious prayer for deliverance so that they can do the work that they are called for with pride and dignity and care for the sick in the most humane way as possible.

Cancer awareness

I have been invited here to address the congregation on any health subject and was not confined to any specific topic. Because Health has set aside October as the Breast Cancer Awareness Month I would like to engage with you on this topic. Breast Cancer or other forms of cancer are still regarded as taboo within many black communities, others associating it with other races, witchcraft and all sorts of myths. It is hence importance that when we gather in this fashion we educate our people about this killer disease, the importance of getting tested, benefits of early detection, dangers of the disease and available forms of treatments.



Two years ago the Department partnered with Algoa FM in the Big Walk for Cancer, a worthy cause aimed at raising cancer awareness and fighting cancer. Since the partnership took off, I am proud to say within the short space of two years we have been able to reach more and more people, educating them about the dangers of cancer through outreach based advocacy campaigns.

For this year, the 2016 Big Walk for Cancer will take place in Port Elizabeth on 29 October. We invite everyone, whether a cancer survivor, sufferer, a family member of a sufferer and everyone generally to rally behind this worthy and informative cause. We have already launched the pre Big Walk awareness campaign, starting with the first launch in Port Alfred in September followed by the second round in Mdantsane at the beginning of this month.

Through this platform we are able to fulfil the Department's objectives in the fight against cancer through the following phases:

Primary Prevention Awareness: Create awareness of cancer as a lifestyle disease, promote healthy lifestyles, in order to prevent its occurrence.

Secondary Prevention: Early Diagnosis and referral for prompt treatment through the provision of opportunities for screening, testing and early detection.

Tertiary Prevention: Rehabilitation wherein we provide services to motivate survivors to live longer and support family members in an effort to accept the disease.

You may be sitting there and wondering how this topic concerns you as you have never been affected by the disease. I want to draw your attention to these statistics.

According to the Cancer Association of South Africa (SANSA) cancer accounts for more deaths than TB, AIDS and Malaria and further reveals the following:

- one in four South Africans is affected by cancer through diagnosis of family, friends or self;
- 90% of cancers are caused by environmental and lifestyle factors such as smoking, diet and exercise;
- More than 100 000 South Africans are diagnosed with cancer every year; and
- The South African cancer survival rate is 6/10.

The top five cancers affecting women are Breast; Cervical; Original unknown; Colorectal; and Kaposi sarcoma while in men Prostate; Original unknown; Kaposi sarcoma; lung; and colorectal are the most prevalent.



I am sure that with the reveal of these statistics you have an idea of how real cancer is. Cancer can affect anyone whether you are a child, woman or male, you too can be affected (ayikhethe bani futhi ayikhethemzi). Okumele nje thina sikwenze ukuba sifundiseke sense konke okusemandleni ethu ukuthintela icancer ngokuthi sithathe izigqibo ezinobulumko ezikhokhelela kwimpilo entle ende. As I have indicated earlier, cancer is mostly caused as a result of environmental or lifestyle factors and hence my humble appeal that we make wise lifestyle decisions in our lives.

Working together towards fighting cancer we can effectively change these statistics. We have here in our midst a sizeable group of health professionals who have willingly come to serve you free of charge. I urge you to maximise this opportunity by making use of available health screening services; learning as much as possible from information sessions so that you can spread the work in your communities and teach others about making wiser health choices in life.

Lifestyle illnesses other than cancer

Furthermore I wish to bring to your attention that South Africa has a very high level of disease burden which accounts for numerous deaths in our country, and the Eastern Cape Province is equally affected. Amongst these illnesses are non-communicable Diseases (NCDs), otherwise known as lifestyle illnesses including Cardiovascular diseases; Diabetes; Chronic respiratory conditions; Cancer; Mental disorder; Oral diseases; Eye disease; Kidney disease; and Muscular-skeletal conditions which have been identified as the leading causes of mortality in the world.

While studies have revealed these diseases as mainly responsible for deaths, they can equally be preventable through reduction of the contributing factors to lifestyle diseases like tobacco; physical inactivity; unhealthy diets; harmful use of alcohol; and sexual behavior. Early detection and timely treatments of these ailments can also have added benefits, meaning that if we can individually take important decisions about our health many deaths and chronic illnesses can be prevented or treated.

Even beyond this day I encourage you to make use of health facilities like Clinics; Primary Health Care Facilities and Hospitals to get professional advice on health conditions and treatment where necessary to prevent long term effects and fatalities. There is significant evidence that early detection of lifestyle illnesses can lead to treatment and cure for sufferers and hence we implore you to take heed of ailment warning signs; changes to our bodies and immediately seek medical



Similarly to non-communicable diseases, communicable diseases like HIV/AIDS and TB significantly contribute to the burden of disease faced by our country in particularly for poor and vulnerable groups of our communities and hence government has decided to put efforts into addressing HIV and AIDS and TB in a combined manner. The most important strategy to combat these diseases is the HIV and AIDS Counselling and Testing (HCT) Campaign which promotes knowing one's health status as early as possible; behaviour change; prevention of spreading the disease; making use of protection amongst other things.

During this month alone, the Department has launched two youth focused HIV/AIDS related campaigns in Alfred Nzo and Buffalo City respectively. Although these are different programmes pursued with different partners their commonality is that they are targeted at adolescent girls and young women due to the high HIV/Aids prevalence rate amongst this group. A key contributing factor for high infection rate amongst the young girls and women as well as early pregnancy which leads to school drop outs has been attributed to the new dangerous phenomenon of blessers or sugar daddies. We are doing all in our power to restore a girl child's dignity and worth and we need parents to make their contribution as well through instilling values and discipline at home.

Our Department commits to continue to undertake vigorous health promotion initiatives in order to reduce the burden and ensure control of the spread of HIV/AIDS and TB infection, however I wish to emphasize again that without your support and commitment to take responsibility of your own health all these interventions by government will not bring any positive change.

The department continues to create health learning platforms, even at school level to empower young people on health choices; to provide Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) to HIV positive patients to manage the infection. I therefore encourage you to visit your nearest health facilities to check your status so that you can receive care. I also appeal to parents to have open discussion with your children so that they too can made wiser life choices.

In closing, always remember that a Healthy Lifestyle is a journey of a lifetime which requires one to be aware of the implications of lifestyle decisions that we make daily. It is high treat that we take our health with high regard as this is key to longevity and a disease free life. Make a wise choice today and choose a healthy lifestyle and avoid alcohol and substance abuse; get screened for early detection; exercise regularly and make wise diet choices.



Lastly, I invite those who are available and able to join us for the Big Walk for Cancer to register and join us in Port Elizabeth on the 29th October 2016. Come and be counted amounts the agents of change and save lives.

The book of Matthew 28:19 (King James Version) reads as follows: 19 *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

In the same breath I want to say, go ye therefore and be ambassadors of healthy lifestyles, teach and empower others with all the knowledge that you have acquired today to that we can heal and save our nation.

I thank you.

