

New psychiatric facility opens in KZN

A new private psychiatric clinic was almost full almost a week after opening, thanks to the increased awareness of mental health in communities.



Akeso Clinic, Umthanga, KZN

Mindset shift

"There seems to be a mindset change in society in terms of the acceptance of the need of mental health care. Increasing workloads, peer pressure, crime, unemployment, poverty and instability in the family lead to increasing trauma and hence a real need for mental health care assistance. All of these stresses and trauma also lead to increased substance abuse," says hospital manager, Brenda Govender.

State-of-the-art facilities

The 76-bed Akeso Clinic currently offers psychiatric care through three specialised units. Patients presenting with depression, bipolar mood disorders, anxiety disorders, adolescent disorders, eating disorders and substance abuse are treated in the general psychiatry unit. The dual diagnosis unit not only assists with the problems of addiction, but also examines the underlying root causes behind the addiction to assist patients with rehabilitation. Youngsters between the ages of 14 and 18 years are admitted to, and cared for, in the young adults unit.

"In addition to four group therapy rooms, there is a fully equipped art room where specialised occupational therapists work with patients, engaging in activities like beading, wire work, mosaic, painting, collaging and others. In the fully equipped recreational room, patients play pool, table tennis and a variety of board games. The large, bright and comfortable dining room caters for the needs of patients from different cultural groups, and has views of the beautiful outdoor gardens."

In terms of staffing, the clinic boasts experienced nursing teams as well as a multi-disciplinary therapy team consisting of two clinical psychologists, two occupational therapists, an addiction counsellor and an occupational therapy assistant. These professionals, together with the clinic's referring psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers, render an entirely integrated service. "We firmly believe in, and subscribe to, a holistic patient approach in terms of biological (medication) therapy which is prescribed by our specialist psychiatrists, together with a tailor-made group, individual and family therapy programme," explains Govender.

"As the year unfolds, we want to visit schools and universities to tell our young people that we offer services that can help them with various mental health issues. And, as families play a vital role in our holistic care approach and in the after-care process, we really look forward to working increasingly with family groups to provide the necessary advice and support. Along with our sister clinic, Akeso Pietermaritzburg, we want to play a vital role in improving the mental health care of those in need in Kwazulu-Natal," she concludes.

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