

# Medical association sends doctors to Limpopo hospital

The SA Medical Association (Sama) said on Tuesday (8 January) it will deploy doctors to the George Masebe Hospital in Limpopo where four babies died of treatable diseases amid on-going staff shortages.

"Our members both in public and private sectors have volunteered and will start with rounds in the paediatric wards," said Sama chairman Phophi Ramathuba.

"We will be taking turns in providing health services until the situation is normalised," she said.

Sama was working with the Limpopo health department to find solutions to the shortage.

Ramathuba said the infants' deaths were tragic and showed that there were management problems in public hospitals.

The SABC reported that there was not only a shortage of doctors but that the hospital's entire management contingent was on leave at the time of the deaths.

"We acknowledge the fact that people are entitled to take leave over the festive period, [but] we still need answers from the provincial health authorities on why these infants died," Ramathuba said.

She said changes needed to be made to ensure people regained their trust in the public health system.

*Beeld* reported that Limpopo health MEC Norman Mabasa had called for a commission to investigate the deaths.

"I want to know exactly how and when each child died. As we understand it, two died shortly after they arrived in the casualty unit, and the other two died after being admitted to the wards," he told the newspaper.

The commission was expected to report back to him within a week.

Mabasa promised to take action if hospital personnel were found to have been negligent.

The National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (Nehawu) said the hospital's staff should be held accountable for the infants' deaths.

The union claimed the hospital was 75% full when the babies died and that there was only one doctor on duty. The basic medical supplies and stocks had been depleted.

The union claimed that three of the hospital's nine doctors resigned in December.

According to Mabasa, a 288-bed hospital like George Masebe should have 38 doctors employed but it had only eight.

Source: *Sapa* via I-Net Bridge

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