

Eastern Cape hospital CEO faces axe

Plans are afoot to suspend the chief executive of the Holy Cross Hospital in the Eastern Cape and its nursing manager, Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi said.



Aaron Motsoaledi (Image: GCS)

He was announcing the findings and recommendations of a probe sparked by a report by the Eastern Cape Health Coalition titled "Death and Dying. An Investigation into the collapse of a healthcare system".

"It is my intention that the chief executive should be suspended with immediate effect," Motsoaledi told reporters in Pretoria. "It is [also] my intention that the nursing services manager should also be suspended with immediate effect pending the full investigation."

Motsoaledi did not name them.

Eastern Cape health spokesman Sizwe Kupelo said his department would put Motsoaledi's recommendations into effect. "I do not want to compromise the process because of pressure from the media. I cannot give you the names until they have been notified procedurally," Kupelo said.

Motsoaledi said he would report them to the SA Nursing Council, since they were both nurses by profession. Further recommendations were that disciplinary measures be taken against the hospital's administrator.

Motsoaledi's investigators had found gross mismanagement at the hospital, which was investigated along with other hospitals in the OR Tambo district after the release of the coalition's report. He noted as an example of the mismanagement, an incident involving price inflation while purchasing stationery.

Wasteful expenditure

"Folders that could be purchased for R3,000 have been found to have been purchased for R30,000," Motsoaledi said adding that he thought the hospital could be the best in the district if it was well managed.

"It should be noted that this hospital was part of the Hospital Revitalisation Programme and R105m was spent to refurbish," he said. The district is in one of the 11 pilot districts for the National Health Insurance initiative.

In its report, the coalition, which includes Section 27 and the Treatment Action Campaign, called for drastic action to rebuild the province's health care system. It detailed stories of patients being unable to get help :

hospitals and clinics because of a lack of medication.

It identified mismanagement of funds as an underlying problem, finding that the department over-spent on staffing budget by more than R1bn in 2011/12 because of above-inflation salary increases and poorly managed employee benefits.

"I assure you the matter of mismanagement of funds is being dealt with and is receiving the attention it should. We are doing something about it," Motsoaledi said. Asked if he would take on the provincial leadership in the health department, Motsoaledi said his hands were tied.

"There is no minister in the country that can appoint MECs. They are appointed by the premier. So I work with them," he said.

Upgrading underway

He said that more than R1bn would be spent upgrading the Eastern Cape's healthcare system where the health department is implementing 287 projects covering new additions, upgrades, renovations and maintenance works in 132 facilities.

Of these projects, 159 were in the construction phase, and the rest were at developmental phase. The projects included the building and refurbishment of eight nursing colleges.

The coalition applauded the national intervention and the swift response to its report.

"We are encouraged by his [Motsoaledi's] commitment to tabling a comprehensive plan to address the crisis," the coalition said in a statement.

Source: Sapa via I-Net Bridge