

North West health invests R14m in TB treatment

North West Health Department has allocated R14 million for laboratory tests in order to diagnose tuberculosis (TB) and get people treatment as early as possible.

By [Nozipho Dlamini](#) 27 Jun 2007

Mafikeng - On Tuesday, acting departmental spokesperson, Lesiba Molala, said the labs would be crucial for the people of the North West.

“Every month at least 2,100 new TB patients start treatment in this province and of those patients who took their treatment exactly as prescribed for the whole duration of treatment [6-8 months], 90% or more were cured.”

However, it was discouraging that almost 30% of those who started treatment did not finish, said Mr Molala.

About five cases of extreme drug resistant (XDR) have been confirmed and treated and 289 multi-drug resistant (MDR) patients are currently on treatment.

Last week, MEC Nomonde Rasmeni visited the Lehurutshe village in Motswedi where they handed over nutritional food supplements to TB patients and encouraged them to complete their TB treatment.

Government spends R400 per patient with ordinary TB.

If patients default on treatment and develop a multi-drug resistant TB, the cost of treatment dramatically increases to R24,000. This is because it includes hospitalisation and more expensive drugs.

Molala said in Bophirima district almost 400 new TB patients start treatment every month.

“There are 58 cases of multi-drug resistant TB in the district,” he said.

Although TB was considered a poverty disease, HIV has become the main determinant for the development of TB in patients.

“In the province, 66-70% of all TB patients are also HIV positive. MDR TB is a serious form of TB with only a 60-70% chance of being cured.

“It is required to go into isolation in hospital for 4-8 months and the treatment duration is a full 2 years,” added Mr Molala.

The department has also taken infection control measures to support preventing the spread of infection.

“In most clinics and hospitals ultra-violet germicidal irradiation units have been installed to prevent the spread of TB,” he said.

In addition, briefing the media last month on progress made by departments in Cabinet's Social Cluster, Minister of Social Development Dr Zola Skweyiya, said the country had stepped up its efforts to prevent a potential crisis by making the appropriate drugs available in the public health sector, to treat drug-resistant

strains of TB.

He said nurses and doctors were being specially trained.

Isolation wards in hospitals were also being extended and a surveillance system specialising in detecting and XDR-TB has also been developed.

The World Health Organisation has also provided South Africa with a technical adviser, Dr Fabio Scano, to strengthen South Africa's response.

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