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Department of
Health
FREE STATE PROVINCE

SPEECH BY THE MEC FOR HEALTH, MS ES MABE AT THE OPENING OF THE PSYCHIATRIC UNIT OF BOITUMELO REGIONAL HOSPITAL, KROONSTAD, 20 AUGUST 2009.

Program Director

Ms Mantebo Mokgosi, Mayor

Councilor Mr. Mustapha Mantso

Chairperson and members of the Hospital Board

Chairperson and Members of the Mental Health Review Board

Representatives from the South African Police Services and the Departments of Justice and Social Development

Ladies and Gentlemen

Introduction:

Since the 1950's, the equality of man as was envisioned by the Declarations contained in the Freedom Charter seemed far from reality considering the tormenting repression the people of our country suffered at the hands of the previous regime. It now appears that the declarations are more real now than as may have been perceived then.

That is why I am happy to join you today in what will go down in the history of this hospital as one of the greatest demonstrations of the commitments of the ANC-led government that there shall be equal access to healthcare services for a better life for all, bringing with it a joyous daybreak to end the long nights of inadequacies in the provision of Mental Health Services.

A recent nationally representative survey of South African adults indicated that 16.5% of the population had experienced a mental disorder in the prior twelve month period. The most common disorders were major depressive disorders (4.9%), agoraphobia (4.8%), and alcohol dependence (4.5%). Twenty eight per cent of adults with a severe or moderately severe disorder received treatment, compared with 24% of mild cases. Treatment was provided mainly by the general practitioners as it is commonly the case among our people.

The National Department of Health being responsible for developing mental health policy and law, and the provincial health departments and local authorities in some instances are responsible for the delivery of services. Within these structures, a mental health policy based on primary care principles was adopted in 1997, and a mental health care act was passed in 2002 and enacted in 2005.

Following the establishment of the mental health policy and legislation, the provincial and local health planners, in their pursuit to fulfill the mission of the Department of Health in fostering a caring and humane society in which all South Africans have access to affordable and good quality health care, have been challenged to manage the transformation from hospital-based to community-based care for many other ailments, to integrate benign mental health problems into general health services, to secure an adequate number of trained health workers, and to expand mental health prevention and promotion where possible.

That is why in assisting the process, much emphasis has been placed on building and developing primary health care, and re-orientating hospitals as referral facilities for complex or severe cases that require secondary and tertiary level care.

Ideally, and according to national norms for general health care at primary level, mental health care should be included in all primary care services. General nurses trained in psychiatric care should be able to identify and manage patients with depression, anxiety, stress-related problems, and severe mental disorders such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorders.

They should also be able to provide maintenance medication and care for people with chronic mental disorders, as well as to offer basic counseling. In addition, all clinics should receive regular visits from dedicated mental health professionals, have 24-hour access to a mental health specialist for consultation and be able to make referrals when necessary. But, there have been challenges to this extent and we are here to begin to address this ideal.

We are alive to the fact that there are challenges or barriers to full mental health integration and provision as mentioned which include:

- Shortage of mental health care nurses and professionals and
- Restrictions that prohibit primary care nurses with psychiatry training from providing psychotropic medications

I am pleased today to bring good news and highlight the progress of our **Boitumelo Revitalisation Project**.

Program Director, I am pleased to be part of this occasion where we can celebrate service delivery to a very vulnerable segment of our community. Today as we officially open the Boitumelo Psychiatric Unit, we not only focus attention on the completion of a milestone and promise we made to our communities but also highlight again the need for tailor-made services which are to serve our communities in full.

The Boitumelo Psychiatric Unit forms part of the total Revitalisation project currently on the go on this very site. The construction all around us is testimony to the hard work and dedication by hospital management, construction crews, various government departments, corporate management, the hospital board and alike.

In total there are 13 different contracts which when completed will change the face of Boitumelo forever. Of these contracts, the following has been completed:

- Contract 1: Nurses Residence to the value of R13,1m
- Contract 2: Outpatient and Admissions to the value of R17,8m
- Contract 3: Pharmacy, X-Ray and Five Theatres to the value of R21,3m
- Contract 4: Maternity to the value of R15,9m
- Contract 5: Doctors Residence to the value of R13,6m
- Contract 6: Site Sewer & Bulk water Reticulation to the value of R7,3m
- Contract 7: Mechanical Infrastructure: contract completed to the value of R16,6m
- Contract 8: Electrical Infrastructure to the value of R9,9m
- Contract 9: Psychiatric Ward contract to the value of R23,4m

Ladies and Gentlemen, work still continues on Contract 10: Casualties, Therapies, Emergency, Lecture Rooms and Laboratory; Contract 11: New Wards, Lecturer Rooms and Administration; Contract 12: Kitchen, CSD, ICU, Existing Wards of which the planning was completed and Contract 13: EMS and Engineering of which R13,4m was already spent.

It is obvious that our investment in the future of Boitumelo Hospital is founded in our belief in our people and the future of health care in the province.

The Psychiatric Unit opened its doors for patients in April 2009 and at the end of July 70 patients have been treated. The Unit operates 24 hours and services include care and treatment of Substance Induced Psychosis; Schizophrenia; Bipolar Mood Disorders amongst others. Patients access the Unit through referrals, the South African Police Services, Dept of Correctional Services as well as through family structures.

The current staff compliment of 12 professional, 13 enrolled nurses and 8 auxiliary nurses are now in a position to strengthen the impact of the existing mental health services in the Fezile Dabi district. With the three psychiatric nurses the services will only be enhanced. A great benefit of this Unit is the fact that it now manages cases which were previously managed at Free State Psychiatric Complex in Bloemfontein as there is also a Psychiatrist at the Unit. We are also able to strengthen the Child and Adolescence Mental Health Clinic Services. The Unit has also enabled us to ensure patient safety and abscondment have been minimized. The Mental Health Review Board is fully functional.

Program Director, with the official opening of this psychiatric unit today, we seek to create access to the facilities by the relevant patients, have staff competent to address the basic treatment and care needs of the psychiatric patients, strain every nerve to ensure availability of specialist psychiatric services and quality mental health care, implement requisite financial resources as a vertical and integrated service for both psychotropic medication and staff acquisitions, strengthen primary health care services to deal with mental health risks, psychotropic medicine supply, liaison with partners and nongovernmental organizations, mental health information and availability of known and effective methods of intervention.

Program Director, we are conscious of the important role played by the enforcement agencies particularly the South African Police Services in mental disorder interventions among the violent non-treaded patients and those with anti-social behaviour. It is crucial that we strengthen our partnership for better and collective approach in fostering social behavioral transformation. We value your support!

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the organizers of this event today and everyone who has come to witness this auspicious occasion. I hereby declare the Boitumelo Psychiatric Hospital Unit officially open. May you continue to touch the sick with your hand and dissipate wellness.

THANK YOU