



health

Department of
Health
FREE STATE PROVINCE

IMPACT SPEECH BY Dr SIPHO KABANE, EXECUTIVE MANAGER – CLINICAL SERVICES ON BEHALF OF MR SAKHIWO BELOT, MEC FOR HEALTH AT THE MRC / MTN SA FOUNDATION SA TELEMEDICINE LAUNCH, 12 MARCH 2009, BOTSHABELO DISTRICT HOSPITAL.

Program Director

Honorable Minister Derick Hanekom , Minister of Department of Science and Technology

Ms Beatrice Marshoff, Premier

Professor Mbewu, President of the Medical Research Council

Mr Z Masiza, Chief Corporate Service Officer, MTN SA

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen

Excellence in health care delivery in our province today took another step forward with the reception of this generous contribution from the Medical Research Council of South African and the MTN SA Foundation. Health care delivery in the country and as such also in the Free State is delivery to millions of people annually against a background of scarce resources. It is within this environment that many of our health care professionals are challenged every day to provide quality service and having to make do with what they have.

It is a true fact that our health care environment stretches the abilities of the available health care professionals to its limit. It is priority to optimally utilize the available health professionals and to subsequently use all technological resources to our disposal.

Program Director, the telemedicine project in the Free State is an example of how, after initial explorative research into the existing Tele-health experiences nationally and internationally a project of this nature was introduced in the Free State. The project was amongst others introduced since the drain of health care professionals from peripheral areas to the more developed urban centers and difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified staff in peripheral areas puts an additional burden on our human resource management. Many of our peripheral health care professionals also find themselves isolated from their peers.

The introduction of a telemedicine program enabled us to

- enhance service delivery and accessibility of health care;
- upgrade the diagnostic abilities of hospitals and primary health care clinics, resulting in better quality of care;
- provide access that is readily available for rural communities to specialist medical care;
- education, training and capacity building in peripheral hospitals; and
- health promotion opportunities for patients through Mindsets.

The Telemedicine program also contributes directly and indirectly our patients and members of the community through reducing long queues at specialist clinics; reducing waiting periods via a booking system, better case management and limited administrative procedures.

Program Director, it is not only our patients, clients and health care workers who benefit but the Department of Health in the Free State as a whole. With this system we reduce transport costs and accommodation costs for health care professionals and decreased overtime for drivers and escort nurses; limit patient overcrowding at hospitals and impact on the availability of staff at institutions. On the whole the system allows us to work more efficient and effectively.

Program Director, may I express my gratitude and appreciation to the MRC and MTN SA Foundation for their generous support. I need to mention that in the new financial year we have made funding available for the roll- out of Telemedicine in the province. Four of our regional hospitals will benefit - Bongani Regional Hospital in Welkom; Boitumelo Regional Hospital in Kroonstad; Dihlabeng Regional Hospital in Bethlehem and the Mofumahadi Manapo Mopeli Regional in QwaQwa. The Diamant District Hospital in Jagersfontein will also be added.

Packages for regional hospitals will include: Tele- radiology, Tele-Dermatology, Tele- ophthalmology, Tele-trauma, Tele-ENT, Tele-Cardiology (ECG), Videoconferencing, Tele-Consultation and Vital signs monitoring.

In conclusion, as we look in the future, rehabilitation, education, training, organizational and leadership expectations will be dramatically changed by technology and distance provision of health care and knowledge transfer. The telemedicine system allows us to be more creative, proactive, productive and on the cutting edge of health care delivery. The support from the private sector is obviously important and we are looking forward to future successful partnerships with the Medical Research Council and MTN SA.