

**EMBARGO: Immediate Release**

**7 June 2012**

**MEC FEZI NGUBENTOMBI MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RESEARCH DAY, 7 JUNE 2012, JAMES MOROKA BUILDING, UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE.**

Programme Director,

MMC's for Health

Traditional Leaders and Healers

HOD of the Department of Health DR Siphso Kabane

Executive Managers and all officials of the Department at all levels

University Management here present and,

Partners

Allow me to thank you all for making time to attend this important occasion that is going to consider the Importance of Health Research.

Programme director, during the tabling of the budget vote for health 2011/2012 we articulated that *"research and development plan of the Free State Department of Health will focus on research that informs the national outcome of improving the health status of the entire population and contribute to government's vision of **A Long and Healthy Life for All South Africans**. To achieve this, we will establish and launch the Provincial Health Research Committee and develop and maintain a database of health research projects carried out in the province. A dedicated research fund will be created to conduct research on prioritised areas of health research in the province that will facilitate the development and implementation of evidence based health policy"*.

The event today, is therefore a dream come true for all of us and the people of the Free State in general. We are indeed a government at work!

As we venture into this critically important task of research we should dedicate ourselves to work physically and intellectually, to be real agents of change, fearlessly taking our space in the terrain of social research to answer to the most famous question Lenin once asked what is to be done? Put differently the question for us therefore in the health sector is what is to be done in the face of many challenges we face in health? Research is and must be used as a powerful tool that could really be put at the disposal of humanity as a whole to advance development and more importantly our service delivery imperatives.

Programme Director, when we began the mandate of this fourth democratic government we agreed to put health as one of the key priorities alongside others like job creation, education, combating crime and corruption, rural development and land reform and social transformation. To propel us forward to implement these key priorities, government developed a Negotiated Service Delivery Agreements (NSDA) regime which is basically a charter reflecting the commitments of various sectoral and intersectoral partners linked to the delivery of identified outputs as they relate to a particular sector of government. For the

health sector our compass is the vision of ***A long and Healthy Life for All South Africans*** and the four attendant outputs namely;

- Increasing Life Expectancy
- Decreasing Maternal and Child mortality
- Combating HIV and AIDS and decreasing the burden of disease from Tuberculosis and,
- Strengthening Health system Effectiveness.

Programme director, I am presenting this background in order to clarify us all regarding the context in which to locate research work as part of the priorities in the ten point plan . More research studies and surveys will help us generate key reliable information for health planning, service delivery and monitoring. Also, the national health Act No. 61 of 2003 is instructive about the importance of research, amongst others the Act stipulate that the province is mandated to conduct and facilitate research on health and health services and to ensure health system research.

The purpose of the health research day is to establish what relevant research is actively pursued by research fraternity of the University of the Free State and health department of the Free State Province. From this, the Health Research Committee we are launching later today can establish strong research points and can build on that and expand it to start the process to achieve goals of the department.

This research day that was organised by members of the Provincial Health Research Committee is to start the process to make the Free State population healthier and so lengthen their life span. It will also be important to know what the burden of disease and the disease profile of inhabitants of the Free State are in order to design strategies to improve their health.

Therefore, first priority is to establish baseline values for the Free State population. Interventional programmes can then be devised and implemented and success thereof measured against the baseline. This is obviously a long term strategy, but we have to start somewhere because as Nelson Mandela once said; ***“the challenge is to move from rhetoric to action, and action at an unprecedented intensity and scale. There is a need for us to focus on what we know works”***.

Programme director, as we move forward I also wish to address some of the most critically important research matters that I believe are worth noting and these are health research categories, namely; evaluation research, Intervention research and priority-driven research

### **Evaluation research**

The objective of evaluation research is to identify the social determinants of health that impact on life expectancy due to high mortality and morbidity in particular. Without a sound understanding of a community's cultural psyche, many health workers find that programs fail despite their best efforts and advanced technologies. To avoid such pitfalls, health workers must conduct research to understand the cultural perceptions of disease in the communities where they serve, and develop culturally-sound healthcare services. The areas of concern include, Chronic illness prevention, cure, care and treatment and self-management regimes, evaluations of major causes and risk factors implicated in chronic conditions, injury, social and emotional well-being.

Without continued progress in health research, we would not be able to further our knowledge of the causes, treatments, and cures of disease, as well as understanding the factors that cause higher mortality and morbidity.

Medical research studies are done to learn about and to improve current treatments. We all benefit from the new knowledge that is gained in the form of new drugs, vaccines, medical devices (such as pacemakers) and surgeries.

Health research should not only generate knowledge; more importantly, it should lead to action. In particular, research outcomes must guide policy and program development as well as the delivery of health services. Healthcare interventions should be evidence-based and grounded in solid research. In such instances, research is essential in order to foresee negative outcomes and to ultimately ensure the successful implementation of health programs. Furthermore, community-defined research needs are important especially in the area of prevention and health promotion. Health and medical researches aimed at strengthening the links between evidence and policy, this increases the role of scientific inquiry in all facets of policy making leading to evidence based planning.

Practitioners in the research fraternity need to embark on search translation activities such as design of health promotion messages, particularly information about genetics, cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, diabetes and high blood pressure

Research is needed to improve the understanding of the factors that affect secondary and tertiary health care access in all settings, this will establish research relationships which value Indigenous knowledge, identify the health infrastructure requirements, intervention and priority-driven research to maintain an evidence base on the geographical distribution of disease

Relative to health care access

### **Intervention research**

The objective of intervention research is to apply evidence from research in Health care and health service delivery. For example, a comprehensive strategy for alcohol harm reduction sensitive to local community infrastructure Issues, Intervention research will ideally combine social health and clinical health research.

### **Priority-driven research**

The objective of priority-driven research is to determine the factors that strengthen health system in terms of infrastructure needs; this include identification of resource gaps and establishing a strategic framework for improving the health of the Free State community through effective Public health research resulting in formulating guidelines and advise the provincial department of health and the community on matters relating to; the improvement of health, the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of disease, the provision of health care and health care service delivery.

The priority areas of health research are researches that informs policy on mother and child health issues, social and emotional well-being, higher death rates and lower life expectancy, antenatal care, access to prevention and Combating HIV/AIDS and TB diseases. Research that informs strategies in combating chronic illnesses related to poverty, inadequate nutrition and chronic illness such as diabetes and High blood pressure.

Priority effective research needed is the research that breaks through the barriers to positive social participation caused by poverty and psychosocial stress. To address health problems research will be required to have an action-orientated purpose and/or be linked to the community-capacity building goals of existing primary health care service delivery

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate in advance all those appointed into the Research Committee and wish you all great success. ***Together we can do more!***

I thank you all

***END***

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