



MEDIA RELEASE

Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital welcomes its first patients

Johannesburg (14 September 2017) – The Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital (NMCH) is proud to announce that it has safely and successfully served its first patients.

In July, NMCH welcomed its CEO Dr Mandisa Maholwana, who was to lead the team into operations. Having started off as a GP in Soweto, Dr Maholwana's experience spans over twenty years in healthcare and pharmaceutical industries. It was her experience managing hospitals, particularly creating new business strategies for existing hospitals in order to make them more sustainable, that made her perfect fit for NMCH.

Phuthuma Nhleko, Chairperson of NMCH's Board of Directors, says: "We believe Dr Maholwana brings with her a wealth of experience and we look forward to her leadership as NMCH helps improve the lives of the children of Southern Africa."

Since January 2017, NMCH has had a thorough preparatory phase which included recruitment of executives, management and technical staff; setting up of governance systems, policies and protocols; establishment and contracting of service providers; training of staff in running this type of hospital and its ultra-modern equipment; simulation exercises; and dry-runs to test its systems.

With the hospital opening in phases, it will allow the staff to maximise efficiency and patient safety, in order to ensure that the lives of children are not put at risk and care is not compromised.

We will actively open the hospital in phases, starting with the Radiology department which started operating on 21 June. This will be followed by the Cardiology outpatient department, and then renal and surgical units by the end of this financial year. Anaesthesiology and Pharmacy, which provide essential support services to Radiology, have also been operational since June.

"This first patient intake is a seminal milestone. By providing the best quality, we hope to start improving paediatric services to Southern Africa's children," says Dr Maholwana. "All aspects of this transition to the admission of patients were planned with input and guidance from clinicians from our partner hospitals and various academic institutions. It has been an agreeable collaborative effort with government and the referring hospital partners."

As far back as 2009, NMCH, received support from the National Department of Health, with the Minister, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi saying: "We shall continue supporting this initiative as it endeavours to ensure sustainability and excellence."



To date, NMCH has served nearly 200 patients, and has lessened critical cases of paediatric MRI waiting lists at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital. These were followed by patients from Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital for both MRI and CT scans.

Other hospitals will be added in the coming months. Says Maholwana: "Government has proven to be a true partner, not only in the funding provided to the hospitals, but also in the public hospitals' leadership who have worked diligently with us in ensuring the best care is provided for patients. We are thankful to these hospitals, as well as government at local, provincial and national levels."

In preparation for patient intake, the NMCH team ran numerous training and simulation sessions, covering the entire patient journey from admission to discharge. NMCH partners, SickKids International, Johns Hopkins International and GE supported NMCH throughout its preparations, and these partnerships will continue in upcoming months.

Says Dr Michael Apkon, President and CEO of The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids): "Welcoming the first patients to this wonderful new facility is a uniquely exciting milestone for NMCH."

"It is not every day that you have the opportunity to build, from the ground up, such a state-of-the-art, paediatric facility and every single step must be considered to put the quality of care and patient safety first. I commend you on all of the hard work, careful consultation and due diligence you have undertaken to get to this momentous occasion."

"You have strived for excellence and the children of Southern Africa will have an opportunity to benefit from the high quality care your team is now so well prepared to provide."

Maholwana adds: "The patients are loving our facility. There have been many priceless moments of our clinical staff and volunteers playing with little ones and helping them get the assistance that they need. It is really satisfying to see that we are already having an impact."

"We are also thankful to our on-site partners Ronald McDonald House Charities, who will enable deprived families from far-flung areas to stay here and remain close to their young ones; and Radio Lollipop, whose playmakers and radio station will provide care, comfort, play and entertainment for our sick children."

The role of NMCH is to enhance existing tertiary and quaternary paediatric healthcare services. Southern Africa's children need these services and this is the first step in accessing the best quality care for them.

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Editor's Note:

For more information and images, please go to the Media Centre of Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital <http://www.nelsonmandelachildrenshospital.org/pressroom/>

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