



NPSWU VOICES CONCERN OVER MEDICATION SHORTAGES IN KWAZULU-NATAL PUBLIC HEALTH SECTOR

MEDIA STATEMENT – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday February 14, 2025

The National Public Service Workers Union (NPSWU) is deeply concerned about the ongoing reports of medication shortages in KwaZulu-Natal's public healthcare facilities. As a union committed to advancing the rights of public servants and ensuring that citizens receive the healthcare they deserve, NPSWU stands firmly with healthcare workers and the people of KwaZulu-Natal in calling for immediate action to address these critical shortages.

While the KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC, Nomagugu Simelane, has disputed claims of a widespread shortage, citing financial constraints and management changes, the reality faced by public healthcare workers and patients tells a different story. Recent reports from healthcare workers and concerned citizens, as well as visible stock-outs in various public facilities, point to a systemic issue that cannot be ignored.

NPSWU's Position:

At NPSWU, we believe in the core principles of social justice, equity, and the fair treatment of all workers and citizens. As outlined in our mission and vision, we are committed to improving the lives of public servants and ensuring that the services they provide – particularly in healthcare – are not only functional but are sustainable and of the highest quality. The situation in KZN directly affects the rights of patients to access critical care and the ability of public health workers to do their jobs effectively.

While the MEC's claims of a resolved financial situation and medication availability should be taken into consideration, we believe the reality is far from satisfactory. Healthcare workers have raised concerns about unavailability of vital medications such as mental health medicines, ARVs, TB and chronic care prescriptions. This reality not only endangers patients' health but also places immense strain on healthcare workers who are dedicated to serving the public but are being hindered by a lack of essential resources.

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NPSWU Calls for Action:

NPSWU strongly urges the provincial government to urgently review and improve its approach to managing the public health supply chain. The introduction of new centralized procurement processes may indeed be necessary, but it must not come at the expense of critical services. As NPSWU we stand for a comprehensive solution that takes into account the needs of the public, the workers, and the long-term sustainability of the health system.

1. Immediate Action on Medication Stock Outs – The NPSWU demands that the KZN Department of Health urgently address the stock-outs of vital medications, including mental health drugs, ARVs, and chronic medications like TB.
2. Fair Payment to Service Providers – The department must commit to paying service providers on time and ensure that payment delays do not impact patients' access to medication.
3. Transparency and Accountability – We call for greater transparency regarding the stock levels and procurement processes in public health facilities. Patients and workers deserve to know that there is a plan in place to address shortages.
4. Support for Health Workers – It is crucial to provide healthcare workers with the necessary tools to serve the public, including adequate medications, so they can continue to deliver high-quality care without hindrances.

Patients may die with critical medication not being available at hospitals and clinics. As a union, NPSWU pledges to hold the government accountable to its commitment to healthcare and to stand firm in advocating for the rights of all public servants and citizens. We demand that the honourable Premier of KZN, Thami Ntuli, and the Health MEC, Nomagugu Simelane, take responsibility and provide a clear, actionable plan for addressing these shortages.

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