



Draft Speaking Notes: (Remarks)
Deputy Minister Health: Dr S Dhlomo

Venue: NuMeRI, SBAH

Date: 26/01/2023

Purpose of Event: To visit the demonstration site at which the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) collaborates with the SBAH under the remit of the University of Pretoria and the Nuclear Medicine Research Infrastructure (NuMeRI) to offer Targeted Alpha Therapy (TAT) to identified prostate cancer patients in the country.

NDoH Technical Support: Mr S Bakhane and Ms S A Singh

Draft Remarks

- Programme Director
- EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Commissioner Stella Kyriakides
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and gentlemen

Greetings to All!

It gives me pleasure to be part of the delegation here today representing the Ministry of Health of South Africa. As government, this should indeed signal an important era of collaboration with our EC counterparts to enhance research in health care as we jointly endeavour to "leave no one behind". Let me also take this opportunity to thank the team of Steve Biko Academic Hospital for the commendable research work they have undertaken over the past years in the area of Nuclear Medicine. You continue to make us proud as a country.

I agree that the concept of Nuclear Medicine is not spoken about. However Nuclear Medicine has played a critical role in the health sector over many years in the diagnosis of many ailments. It is quite encouraging to see how this practice has evolved over the years to play an increasingly important role in therapeutics as well. Today, I am informed, that there is a new area of Radiation Medicine called Theranostics which engulfs both diagnostic and therapeutic use of Nuclear Medicine.

As a country we continue to experience a quadruple burden of diseases including high burden of HIV and AIDS, TB, as well as a rapidly increasing burden of non-communicable diseases of which Cancer is a high priority. Nuclear Medicine plays a critical role in enhancing our response to our complex burden of disease.

As observed globally and especially in other Low and Middle Income countries, cancer has become one of the leading causes of death and suffering among the communities in our county. The National Cancer Registry Report (2019), reports that our:

Top 5 cancers in men:

- Prostate (25,29%)
- Colorectal (5,63%)
- Lung (4,01%)
- Non Hodgkin Lymphoma (3,2%)
- Melanoma (2,74%)

Top 5 cancers in women:

- Breast (23,22%)
- Cervix (15,85%)
- Colorectal (4,46%)
- Uterus (3.6%)
- Non Hodgkin Lymphoma (2,55%)

As we aim to create equity in access to care among all our communities, government has an obligation not only to ensure implementation of preventative strategies where applicable but also to create access to early detection as well as appropriate and timeous treatment of cancers to

improve our survival rates. It is also necessary for us to recognise the need for research and innovation to enhance treatment outcomes. I firmly believe that creating basic access to diagnosis and treatment can co-exist with our endeavours to be innovative.

It is within this context that I am excited to note and learn more about the role played by the new modality, an Alpha emitting Actinium-225 in the treatment of prostate cancer which clearly will contribute to reducing the burden of disease. It is my believe that the ongoing research collaboration between the Department of Health, the SBAH and our EU counterparts will help expand the use of this treatment modality to other types of cancer such as breast cancer in the future.

It is also my believe that the Nuclear Medicine Research Institute (NuMeRi), having reached a construction completion stage at SBAH will immensely contribute toward realisation of this mission. May I take this opportunity to congratulate the hospital on reaching this milestone and recognise the outstanding research work done by Prof Sathekge and his Team.

Commissioner, Ladies and Gentlemen, as government moves toward achieving Universal Health Coverage through our National Health Insurance, these developments will contribute toward creating equitable access to healthcare, especially by those who are most marginalised and disadvantaged. The National Department of Health looks forward to our partnership as we not only enhance basic access to care but also introduce innovation for better health outcomes and improved quality of survival of our people.

Allow me to congratulate you again for your achievements and express my appreciation to the EU and my fellow Government Departments including the Department of Science and Innovation for your partnership which ensures our vision of “A long and Healthy Life for All”.

I thank you

Deputy Minister : Health

Dr S Dhlomo
26/01/2023