

# Nationwide appeal to rescue Addington

ZOHRA MOHAMED TEKE

**R**ELIEF agency, Gift of the Givers, is mobilising doctors and surgeons nationally to assist with treatment and the surgery backlog at Addington Hospital.

This comes after a meeting yesterday between the organisation's founder, Dr Imtiaz Sooliman, and the head of the Health Department in KwaZulu-Natal, Dr Sibongile Zungu.

Word of the initiative to fly in doctors from elsewhere, including Gauteng and Cape Town, emerged as Daily News staff and hundreds of volunteers prepared to roll up their sleeves for a clean-up at the beachfront hospital tomorrow, to mark Mandela Day.

Sooliman's aim is to have doctors visit at weekends, complete with their own medical supplies and resources needed to perform operations and treat patients. This will continue until a six-month surgery backlog at the hospital is cleared.

Sooliman said he had already made the call to his medical data base, and responses were flooding in: "Doctors and surgeons are responding from all over the country, and we would also like to appeal to medical companies, pharmacies and other private manufacturers or wholesalers to contribute things like towels, linen and other supplies needed in a hospital, to come forward.

"We will accommodate the health workers that we bring down, and will cover their costs of travel and accommodation, but would also like to make an appeal to hotels and airlines to come forward and assist with this where they can," he said.

"The humility and appeal of Dr Zungu cannot be ignored, and we will try our best to make this work."

Zungu stepped in a few weeks ago with a management team to turn around Addington Hospital, amid reports that services and management there were nearing collapse.

She called on the public to volunteer on Mandela Day for a few hours of sprucing at the hospital. The drive, with the Daily News backing it, has drawn a growing number of volunteers, including professional cleaning teams.

"The response has been very humbling and as a department we are very grateful," Zungu said. "Of course it won't resolve issues at Addington overnight but at least we are making a collective start.

"If we can get it right at Addington, we can get it right at other health facilities too, even in the face of all the challenges we have," she said.

This is the first time Gift of the Givers, traditionally known as an international relief organisation, which is quick to react worldwide

TO PAGE 2

## Nursing manager suspended

KAMCILLA PILLAY

THE KZN Department of Health has placed Addington Hospital's nursing manager on precautionary suspension, pending the outcome of an investigation.

KZN Department of Health Head of Department, Dr Sibongile Zungu, confirmed that action had been taken against Asotha Chinniah, but would not go into details of the investigation itself.

"All I can say is that there are multiple issues, but it is sensitive at this stage - we wouldn't like to talk about it," she said.

She said that senior management staff were working together to carry out Chinniah's duties.

She said that while the hospital was facing administrative and operational challenges, a lot was being done to improve its condition.

"We are working particularly on improving patient management, access to the treatment and retrieval of

cards, and so on. Right now, stock at the pharmacy is being dealt with," she said.

A task team comprising senior managers from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health was appointed to look into the management and operational problems at Addington Hospital at the end of last month.

The eight-member team included staff from other hospitals, eThekweni Health district manager Penny Dladla, Dr T Mhlongo, and a matron and a stores manager, who were being asked to come out of retirement.

This came after the Daily News exposed medical supply shortages at the hospital, which have resulted in elective surgeries being cancelled and patients being turned away without medication.

After the Daily News reports, urgent replenishment of stocks and rescheduling of elective surgeries had, with Zungu at the hospital's helm, taken place.

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## Plea to retired doctors

FROM PAGE 1

to natural disasters and wars, has responded domestically with medical personnel – especially at a public health facility.

In an emotional call to health professionals, Sooliman said: "Dr Zungu's appeal is very simple and in the best interests of the patients who, being poor and desperate having been let down by the system, have nowhere else to go.

"Many of us are very fortunate that we can afford alternative private care for our families and ourselves. All Dr Zungu requests is manpower to 'clear surgical slates' and medical expertise in other disciplines to reduce the load of patients waiting months for procedures.

"Gift of the Givers requests all those who have volunteered to carry out service with us on international missions to respond to this critical need, too, within our own country," Sooliman said.

### Welcomed

"Retired doctors, nurses, etc will be welcomed.

"We will take care of your accommodation and transport to Addington.

"All we require is a few hours of your valuable time and expertise in the interest of the people of South Africa, our people.

"If you are willing to respond to this appeal for assistance please e-mail us your contact details, area of residence, expertise and dates you are available."

Those able to offer their assistance are asked to contact Sooliman directly at 083 236 4029 or e-mail him at [sooliman@giftofthegivers.org](mailto:sooliman@giftofthegivers.org)

The clean-up at Addington tomorrow starts at 7am, ending at 7am on Thursday to accommodate night volunteers.

Health officials will man registration tables at the hospital entrance, and will direct volunteers to areas and tasks.

Volunteers still wanting to join the effort can get in touch today with Vanessa Brisset of Community Projects at Independent Newspapers in Greyville.

Call 031 308 2439, or e-mail her: [vanessa.brisset@inl.co.za](mailto:vanessa.brisset@inl.co.za); fax 031 308 2653.

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