



Office of Health Standards Compliance  
Ensuring quality and safety in health care

## OHSC MEDIA STATEMENT

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### **Building systems to reduce the risk in healthcare**

World Patient Safety Day – 17 September

In a world where millions of people each year suffer unintended harm – and sometimes death – in the course of healthcare, South Africa has a long road to travel in building healthcare management systems that reduce the risk to patients, says Dr Siphwe Mndaweni, CEO of the Office of Health Standards Compliance (OHSC).

The OHSC is charged, under the National Health Act, with ensuring that health establishments – from major hospitals to clinics and the practices of doctors and other health professionals – comply with legislated health standards.

“Many standards that we are tasked with enforcing are designed specifically to pre-empt and prevent adverse medical events from occurring,” explained Dr Mndaweni “Healthcare professionals are only human, and they often operate under pressure, so the systems in which they work need to have built-in safeguards. Many guidelines and procedures that exist in good healthcare practice are there to ensure patient safety.”

The OHSC performs hundreds of inspections of health establishments each year to measure their performance against prescribed norms and standards. The process is being gradually expanded to take in more categories of health establishment. It started in 2019 with public clinics and community health centres, expanded in 2021 to include public and private hospitals, and in the foreseeable future will extend to general practitioners (GPs) practices and emergency medical services.

“In the light of our experience of inspections, we recognise it will take commitment and endurance to get our country to the point where all our health professionals work in supportive environments and good-quality, safe healthcare is available to every individual,” said Dr Mndaweni.

The global theme for this year’s World Patient Safety Day is *Act now for safe and respectful childbirth*. It focuses attention on pregnancy and childbirth which continue to claim a heavy toll in terms of women’s and babies’ lives, despite advances over the last two decades.

### **World Patient Safety Day**

The World Health Assembly decided in 2019 to mark World Patient Safety Day annually on 17 September

The purpose is to create public awareness about the size and seriousness of harm caused by adverse events occurring during healthcare

This year World Patient Safety Day focuses on *safe and respectful childbirth* because, globally, there are 810 preventable maternal deaths and 6 700 new-born baby deaths each day

Dr Mndaweni paid tribute to the work of the Confidential Committee of Enquiry into Maternal Mortality. “Much of our work relies on international evidence on the risks to patient safety and preventive interventions. South Africa, however, has excellent local data on maternal deaths which has been analysed with insight by the committee. This has led to recommendations which have largely been implemented by provinces and led to progress in reducing the mortality rate.”

Dr Mndaweni said the work of the OHSC would also impact positively on maternal and infant health. “We believe that many of the standards that we strive to embed across health establishments would also strengthen the care provided to mothers and their babies. The more unity we can build among those who care passionately about the quality of healthcare, the better our chances are of achieving the changes we need and that is what Patient Safety Day is all about.”

#### **ISSUED BY THE OFFICE OF HEALTH STANDARDS COMPLIANCE**

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