

## Media Statement

### Netcare KwaZulu-Natal

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#### **Rising to the challenge of caring for the helpless**

#### **Diagnosed with leukaemia at nine years of age**

*Durban, Friday 27 August 2010* For someone so young, eight-year old Buhle Nthombi from Harding has a heavy cross to bear. Yesterday she was diagnosed with myeloid leukaemia and because of the seriousness of the illness has had to commence treatment immediately.

Buhle, whose name has been changed for reasons of confidentiality, is one of thousands of children and adult patients who have been affected by the healthcare workers' strike. A doctor at a state hospital where workers have been on strike referred the sick little girl to the Netcare Parklands Hospital after recognising that she needed urgent treatment.

Acting Matron at the Netcare Parklands Hospital, Sr Gillian Mthembu, explains that while treatment has already commenced - to give Buhle the best possible chance at survival - further diagnostic tests are needed before an accurate prognosis can be made. Deeply touched by the plight of the shy little girl, who has crept into the hearts of everyone at the hospital, Sr Gillian says that "we're all holding thumbs for her, hoping for the very best".

Buhle's mother says she had to leave five other children, including a two year old, at home in order to ensure her daughter receives treatment. Much as she wants to stay with her sick child she urgently has to return home to take care of the rest of the family. The mother, who never expected her child to be so sick has not made any arrangements to be away from home, nor has she brought extra clothing with her. Until such time as she can safely leave Buhle behind to return home to her other children, she is being accommodated at the hospital.

Sr Gillian says that the Netcare Parklands Hospital has cared for quite a few patients who have been unable to access treatment at public facilities as a result of the strike.

These include two babies who had to undergo abdominal surgery performed by Paediatric Surgeon, Dr Samad Shaik. Because of the complexity of the surgery they were both ventilated after the surgery.

Netcare Coastal Regional Director, Ian Goble, affirms that the strike of healthcare workers in the public sector has had a devastating effect on the delivery of healthcare services in KwaZulu-Natal and Netcare has had to step into the breach in order to help. He says that a total of 86 patients who have been unable to access treatment at public hospitals have been cared for at Netcare facilities around the province, while nearly 400 have been treated within Netcare hospitals nation wide.

According to Goble, all manner of cases have been seen at Netcare hospitals including gunshot and vehicle accident victims who have required urgent medical attention in an ICU. Others have been treated for minor medical problems on an outpatient basis and have since been released. Many patients have been children transferred from public facilities where strike action prevented them from being treated.

Goble says that he has been deeply touched by the way Netcare 911 and Netcare staff have pulled together to work with the SANDF and Government officials to help the ill and infirm from public hospitals. Staff members, doctors, paramedics and students from the Netcare and Netcare 911 training academies have offered their time to care for these patients, he points out.

In a well-publicised case last week, Netcare 911 paramedics delivered a baby in the back seat of a car in the parking lot of the Netcare St Augustine's Hospital, before mother and child were admitted into the emergency ward of the hospital. The mom-to-be was turned away from a public facility before being taken to Netcare St Augustine's Hospital by a Good Samaritan who found her by the roadside.

"I was so touched when I read the article about the delivery of a child in the car park at Netcare St Augustine's Hospital," wrote one mother from Mayville near Durban. "It was so good and generous of your staff to help her. I had my two babies delivered at the hospital and have nothing but the highest praise for the staff there. I even want to do nursing now because of all the love and care that I got from the hospital. Keep it up. What you are doing is caring beyond the call of duty."

The fact that Netcare and Netcare 911 have been able to deal with the extra cases and influx of patients is no coincidence. Netcare has long had a disaster plan in place in order to deal with just such an eventuality. This plan has been continuously updated and was further honed in anticipation of the recent 2010 FIFA World Cup™. Netcare 911 was therefore able to quickly mobilise its emergency workers and fleet of emergency vehicles, while Netcare hospitals have been on stand-by to deal with the overflow of patients from public facilities.

Goble says that the Netcare and Netcare 911 staff and doctors have helped South Africans from all walks of life during the strike. "Our staff have shown how healthcare services can be delivered in a most caring, professional and effective manner even under the most difficult of circumstances."

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