

Concerns over George Mukhari hospital in Ga-Rankuwa

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Concerns over George Mukhari hospital in Ga-Rankuwa Pretoria News / 27 June 2019, 07:30am / MATLHATSI DIBAKWANE THE Human Rights Commission visited the psychiatric ward in Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital recently. Oupa Mokoena African News Agency (ANA)Pretoria - Staff shortages, gross overcrowding, insufficient beds and inadequate facilities for patients with mental health issues were among complaints that forced the South African Human Rights Commission to visit George Mukhari Academic Hospital in Ga-Rankuwa. The complaints were lodged by the Public Servants' Association, representatives said, as they arrived at the hospital to conduct a site inspection of the male and female psychiatric wards. They said the visit was prompted by reports of neglect of patients and ill-treatment of staff by management, and were greeted with facilities undergoing renovations and refurbishment. As such, they were considering conducting unannounced visits to health facilities across the province to check up on the provision of services. The hospital was informed on Sunday that the commission was due for a site inspection as part of an investigation into the hospital's treatment of mental illness patients. The investigation sought to interrogate a number of issues, including access to healthcare services and the quality of treatment and care at the hospital. There they met acting chief executive Professor John Ndimande and his management team, who were told by the commission's provincial manager, Buang Jones, that while they welcomed the renovations, their concern was the plight of mental care users who had to endure the sound made by the ongoing construction. Jones said the commission would ascertain the issue along with other aspects that affected mental health care patients. "They had sufficient time to prepare for our visit. We cannot at this moment make a pronouncement as to whether there are sufficient beds or whether the conditions are in accordance with the norms and standards for the provision of mental health care services," he said. During the walkabout, they discovered that the ward meant for mental health patients, which was equipped to handle 14 patients, housed 37, and were informed that four more patients would join them after their admissions had been finalised. Patients used one bath tub in an isolation room meant for uncontrollable patients, and there was a visible hole in a wall that made it easy for animals or mammals to gain entry. They were further informed that the hospital had been without water for about a week prior to their visit; some patients did not have proper beds or blankets, and some even slept on the floor. The association said they had witnessed contractors smashing and grinding infrastructure in the same space the patients were in. Ndimande assured the team that they were working on getting infrastructure in place. He wanted the community to know that managing health care users was not like managing ordinary patients. "You have to follow them when they go to the bathroom, and this area is taking care of people from sub-districts with a lot of problems, like substance abuse. We have enormous problems with our mental health users because of the burden of mental illness. We did have problems with our mental health units. However, the positive thing is that we are addressing the issues. Within this area we have a lot of psychiatric patients. Mental health patients are a problem because our communities reject them and we end up with overcrowding. However, once we get our constructions in order, I think we will be alright." The commission said it had conducted the inspection of the hospital as part of its ongoing investigation into public health services in the province. The wider investigation into the public health system in the province was to engage progress made by the Department of Health in improving the state of health facilities. Pretoria News.