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MEDIA STATEMENT: The process of discharging former Life Esidimeni patients

Life Esidimeni is deeply saddened to hear of the deaths of Life Esidimeni patients formerly in our care and send our heartfelt condolences to all the families affected.

Life Esidimeni provided quality care to close to 1 970 state mental health patients across four Gauteng facilities up until 30 June 2016 when the Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) contract was terminated.

We remain committed to working alongside GDoH in providing the necessary support subsequent to the contract termination, including regular interactions with the GDoH officials. We would like to clarify that our Life Esidimeni discharge process was handled with care and great concern for patients and their families. In addition, the care of mental health patients is governed by specific legislation with which Life Esidimeni complied with.

We facilitated GDoH access to our facilities and all patient medical records and continue to do so. We adhere and comply to the legislation and ethical guidelines on ownership and retention of patient medical records as per the *Health Professions Council of South Africa* (HPCSA. Original medical files must remain in our possession for the duration of each patient's life.

In addition, our internal protocols and procedures were followed and included an assessment of each patient to determine the type of care they required. This information was shared with GDoH for them to identify and confirm suitable placement for each patient.

The process of discharging and transferring patients covered their medication, mobility aids or devices (i.e. wheelchairs or walkers), personal belongings and relevant patient clinical information. The discharge documentation and items were given to GDoH officials and included the following:

- A transfer note stating the latest on the patient's diagnosis, condition, medication history, risk profile and any recent acute illness and investigation results. Special dietary requirements were also listed.
- Applicable legal documents
- The patient's prescription
- The patient's medication
- Any personal items belonging to the patient
- A set of clothing provided by Life Esidimeni
- A copy of the patient's personal belonging inventory list
- Patient family contact details

"Life Esidimeni prides itself with providing the best quality care to all patients treated in our facilities. We remain committed to ensuring that patients discharged and transferred are cared for in the best possible way by continuing to cooperate with the GDOH and providing on-going access to patient records.

"Life Esidimeni strongly supports the Ministers decision reported in the media, for the Health Ombudsman to investigate the deaths of the 36 deceased patients. We will co-operate fully in this investigation to assist in determining the reasons for the unfortunate deaths", said Life Esidimeni spokesperson Dr Nilesh Patel, Healthcare Services Operations Executive.

Notes to editors

Life Esidimeni's Gauteng Mental health services included the following services to all its patients:

- 24-hour nursing care, onsite pharmacies and a full multidisciplinary team
- · Multidisciplinary clinical and risk assessment
- Tailored physical, functional, recreational and vocational structured rehabilitation programs supported by Occupational Therapists and Technicians, Physiotherapists, Dieticians and Assistants following a multidisciplinary team clinical and risk assessment
- Community integration through family contact and "structured leave of absence" facilitated by Social workers
- Psychiatric and physical healthcare provided by psychiatrists and medical officers
- Mental health / psychiatric medication
- Chronic Disease Management including management of hypertension, diabetes and other chronic diseases
- Antiretroviral (ARV) therapy facilitated through community based ARV clinics
- Safe, quality air-conditioned facilities including accommodation, dining, rehabilitation and recreational facilities
- · Food, bed, board and clothing

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