

# Cancer treatment concerns

Cansa has added its weight to the concerns around cancer treatment with a lack of machines and specialists

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THE Cancer Association of South Africa (Cansa) in KZN has added its voice of concern at the growing crisis regarding access to cancer treatment at hospitals in the province.

Added to this is the breakdown of oncology machines and a shortage of cancer specialists in the province.

This follows complaints from Section 27 about Inkosi Albert Luthuli and Addington hospitals no longer being able to effectively treat cancer patients due to equipment breakdowns and a shortage of specialists.

“This situation is a high priority concern for us as it results in premature and unnecessary deaths. Undue pressure on families due to loss of family members that may include mothers caring for young children and breadwinners. It also causes depression and high levels of anxiety in patients who have been diagnosed but are unable to get treatment,” Melissa Wallace the head of research for Cansa said.

She said Cansa had received several complaints from families of patients.

“Reports indicated that the condition of many cancer patients deteriorated and became critical, while in other cases cancer patients died while waiting for radiation therapy,” she said.

Cansa had, Wallace said, also raised issues regarding the lack of servicing of the radiotherapy machines at Addington Hospital.

“We are also concerned about the lack of oncology consultants at the public oncology centres, more especially radiation oncologists. We will persist with advocacy on this matter until it is adequately addressed,” Wallace said.

She said that since 2015 they had addressed various concerns with the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, about the lack of radiotherapy services in KwaZulu-Natal.

“We have sent several letters to the MEC. In September 2016 the equipment



**LACK:** There is growing concern about access to cancer treatment as equipment and skills are on the decline. PICTURE: BLOG.RESEARCH.CHOP.EDU

was repaired but worked for only a few months due to non-payment of service

providers for machine maintenance.

“In January 2017 Cansa, through the

Cancer Alliance called for an urgent meeting with the minister to address further concerns with regards to the lack of mammography services and the shortage of skilled trained oncologists in the public sector.

“We recently submitted a strong case including evidence from patients and their families related to a range of treatment issues,” Wallace said.

The Health Professions Council of South Africa has warned several departments that they will lose their accreditation to train specialists in light of the situation. The consequences of the crisis extend even to needless patient deaths.

Department of Health spokesperson Joe Maila, referred all comments to the provincial department which indicated that the issue was handled by the Premier’s office whose spokesperson said Willies Mchunu would issue a comprehensive statement on interventions.

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