

Fight for cancer patients to go on

SIBONGISENI MAPHUMULO

CANSA in KwaZulu-Natal has vowed to continue fighting and lobbying for oncology patients to receive treatment despite the crisis in the department of health.

The organisation's Lorraine Govender said the proposal by the department of health to bring in medical staff from the private sector to assist in treating cancer patients on the waiting list, was not a sustainable long term solution.

Govender said the problem was about the minimum hours that doctors would be available to offer treatment as well as the lack of working equipment.

The last oncologist in Durban resigned recently leaving only two in the province at Pietermaritzburg Grey's Hospital which will soon be left with just one as the other will temporarily be stationed at the Inkosi Albert

Luthuli Hospital to minimise the crisis.

"Doctors are not just leaving public hospitals because of better offers but due to the lack of equipment.

"Last month we had doctors marching in Durban because they were not given equipment to treat patients so they would rather leave than to watch patients suffer."

She was unable to say how many cancer patients had been affected by the lack of working oncology equipment and medical staff.

She said that as members of the Cancer Alliance they, together with 31 other organisation would lobby with the department of health to find a permanent solution to the crisis.

"Without doctors and working equipment nurses are unable to render treatment while those living with cancer continue to suffer," Govender said.

Meanwhile, the DA's KZN spokesperson on health, Imran Keeka, continued to call for

health MEC Sibongiseni Dhlomo to be fired.

At a press conference following the release of a damning South African Human Rights Commission report on the oncology crisis in KZN, Keeka said a snap debate in the KZN legislature was needed on the current crisis.

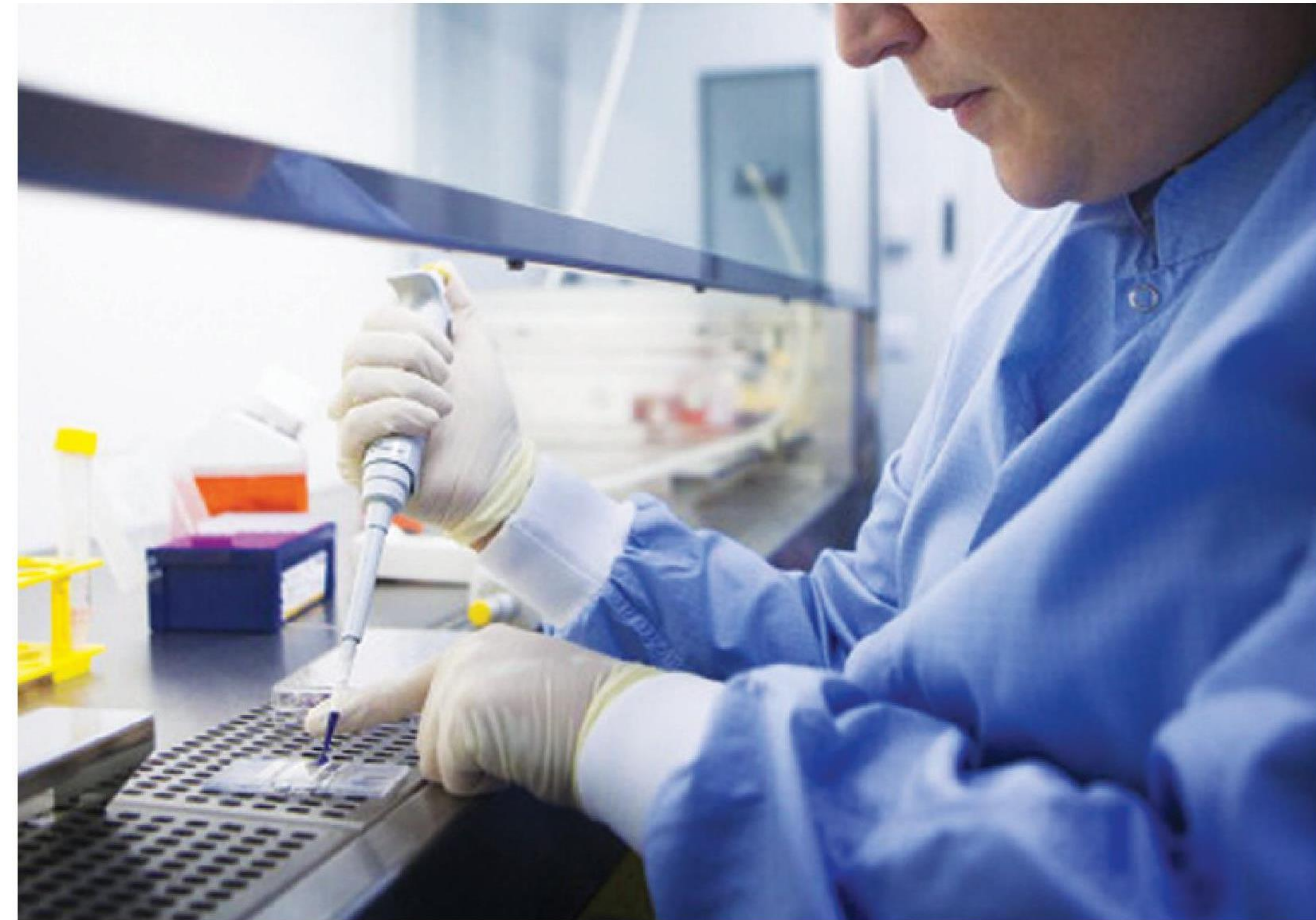
The report said the department of health, both nationally and provincially, had failed to take reasonable measures to progressively realise the right to have access to healthcare services in the province.

"KZN's health department and the MEC allowed cancer patients to die while waiting for treatment and did nothing to stop the impending crisis.

"We expect nothing but denials, obfuscation and more failures of accountability," Keeka said.

The department had not responded at the time of going to print.

sibongisenim@thenewage.co.za



CRISIS: Cansa says KZN lacks the necessary cancer equipment to treat patients. PICTURE: GETTY IMAGES.