

Dora Ngqinza in critical condition

**Brave band of
medical staff
battle on amid
meltdowns,
spies, nurses
asleep in
patients' beds**

Estelle Ellis
ellis@timesmedia.co.za

A HOSPITAL, filled with spies, unhappy burnt-out doctors, meltdowns and nurses who would slip in to patients' beds so they could sleep on duty.

This is the Dora Nqinza Hospital CEO Nombi Qangule left behind when she was forced to go on leave this week following a major labour unrest that threatened to shut down what is a crucial medical facility in the city.

An explosive report, seen by Weekend Post details how desperate maternity unit doctors begged Minister of Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi to intervene in a hospital crippled by staff shortages that had not been addressed in years, where the safety of pregnant mothers was in deep concern.

A top of concern was a major personality clash between Qangule and the head of the department of obstetrics and gynaecology, Dr Mfundo Mabenge.



DOCTORS AT THE EASTERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN STILBESHO BEING TALKED DOWN BY THE HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT TEAM.

Doctors being treated like children "it was like when we were hungry, we were told to eat what we were given. We couldn't even say what food we wanted," doctors told senior managers who intervened.

An entire ward of nurses sleeping on the job.

Problems with teaching grants putting paid to doctors' aspirations to train as specialists.

The stalled appointment of senior doctors in the obstetrics and gynaecology unit which led to senior doctors being overburdened as they had to perform all the caesarian sections because junior staff could not operate independently.

Doctors complaining bitterly that hospital management had let the issue of gross staff shortages at the obstetrics and gynaecology unit slide for years.

Plans for better equipment, at a clinic level, and training being abandoned due to

It was the issue of the sleeping nurses that ignited angry protests by labour unions at the hospital.

The report said all the nurses who were on night duty had "worked themselves in for the night and were sleeping in patients' beds."

A senior source at the Department of Health in Stilbesho said the nurses were not suspended but the issue was handled by the hospital's labour relations division.

Disciplinary action being taken, thought to have led to angry protests which started soon after the disciplinary process.

As the protests raged, the portfolio

committees for health arrived to find a lived and despondent Mabenge pleading for more staff.

This year, in January alone, the mother-born each month - had just 17 doctors, six of whom were specialists and 11 specialist officers or registrars.

These doctors posts had not been filled.

When Motsoaledi was called on to help, he asked Eastern Cape Health MEC Piusa Dnyanyo to intervene and she in turn sent deputy director-general for clinical management, services Dr Patrick Maduna to handle the crisis.

This week, Maduna told labour unions Nkomo, Hooper and Dube - which are calling for Qangule to be suspended - that the department could not suspend her because they had not received complaints about her. The unions have not commented to the media.

Maduna said a task team had been appointed to investigate the allegations.

which Qangule managed the hospital," he said, adding that he had also requested the investigation team to find out who the instigators of the conflict - and eventual meltdown - were.

Maduna said investigators had been given 10 working days to complete their probe and the department would file a case against them.

While the report makes for depressing reading, it also detailed the heroic efforts of a handful of doctors - roughly eight per shift - to ensure the safe delivery of babies and the survival of their mothers.

Among these doctors they had to cover a 60-bed antenatal ward, a 70-bed postnatal ward, a 42-bed gynaecological ward, an 18-bed high care unit, a nine-bed labour ward, a four-bed observation ward and a busy out-patient clinic, 24 hours a day.

Health Department spokesman Siyanda Manana said there would be no further comment on the issue until the investigation had been completed.



DR PATRICK MADUNA

DR PIUSA DNYANYO

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This is the Dora Ngiza Hospital CEO Ntombi Qangule left behind when she was forced to go on leave this week following major labour unrest that threatened to shut down what is a crucial medical facility in the city.

An explosive report, seen by Weekend Post, details how desperate maternity unit doctors begged Minister of Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi to intervene in a hospital crippled by staff shortages that had not been addressed in years, where the safety of pregnant mothers was of deep concern.

Also of concern was a major personality clash between Qangule and the head of the department of obstetrics and gynaecology, Dr Munde Mabege.

Doctors, in a crisis meeting, said of the personality clash: "We have realised that we are being used in a fight that is not our

However, in the report and during recent hearings by the provincial portfolio committee on health, accusations that both Qangule and Mabege were accused were made.

During the same crisis meeting, doctors expressed heartbreak at watching patients die due to staff shortages.

Following a meeting in late January there was an agreement that the two would start working together as both were considered of vital importance to the functioning of the hospital.

But the report outlines how - despite these assurances - doctors reported that they soon became aware that "spies" for both Mabege and Qangule were roaming the hospital passages - relaying any gossip to their bosses.

Other allegations and issues highlighted in the report include:

doctors told senior managers who intervened.

● An entire ward of nurses sleeping on the job.

● Problems with training grants putting paid to doctors' aspirations to train as specialists.

● The stalled appointment of senior doctors in the obstetrics and gynaecology unit which led to senior doctors being overburdened as they had to perform all the caesarian sections because junior staff could not operate independently.

● Doctors complaining bitterly that hospital management had let the issue of gross staff shortages at the obstetrics and gynaecology unit slide for years.

● Plans for better equipment, at a clinic level, and training being abandoned due to budget constraints.

However, officials in Bhishe say they be-

for the night and were sleeping in patients' beds.

A senior source at the Department of Health in Bhishe said the nurses were not suspended but the issue was handled by the hospital's labour relations division.

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born each month - had just 17 doctors of whom were specialists and 11 m officers or registrars.

Nine doctors posts had not been filled. When Motsoaledi was called on to he asked Eastern Cape Health MEC Dyantyi to intervene and she in turn deputy director-general for clinical agreement services Dr Patrick Madu handle the crisis.

This week, Maduna told labour Nelson Hlophe and Dentosa - are calling for Qangule to be suspended because they had not received complaints about her. The unions have commented to the media.

Maduna said a task team had been pointed to investigate the allegations. "The complaints related to the

tion at the Kings Beach car park. from 7.30pm on Thursday.

In New Brighton.

cauzant home for the next 10 days