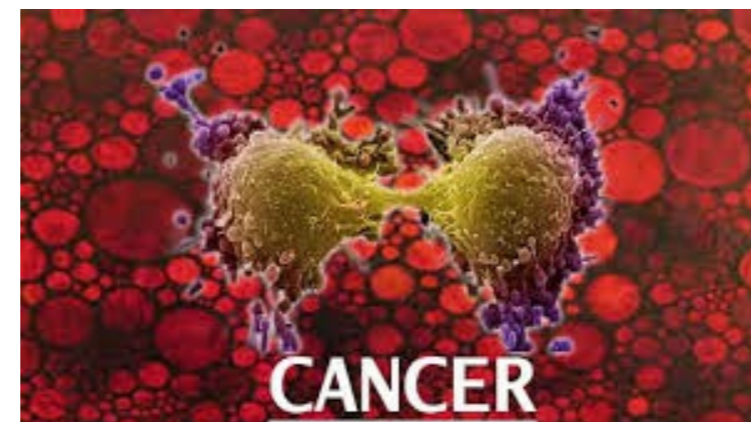




NATIONAL CANCER CRISIS



Mail & Guardian, 27 June

Cancer treatment in the public sector ‘in crisis’?

The rights of cancer patients to access treatment were violated as cancer equipment was found to be not working and there were not enough specialists to meet the demand, especially in Durban (KZN) where the last public sector oncologist recently resigned.

Patients from Northern Cape, Mpumalanga, North West and Limpopo have to be accommodated at the tertiary hospitals in the Western Cape, Gauteng, KZN - and even Eastern Cape and the Free State.

Eastern Cape patients in need of specialist treatment who would usually be sent to KZN are now being sent to the Western Cape.

The Cancer Alliance suggested a partnership between government and private businesses to expand access to cancer treatment.

Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi's reaction

*He does not believe there is a national crisis. The crisis in KZN is not indicative of a broader systemic crisis.

*His department has been working to develop a National Cancer Control Plan which is almost ready.

Drug shortage

Meanwhile a deadly national cancer drug shortage is approaching its third month and patients may have to go without treatment until October.

Aspen Pharmacare is the sole manufacturer of betanoid for South Africa and said it cannot resume producing the drug until drug regulator the Medicines Control Council (MCC) approves a new manufacturing facility.

National Department of Health spokesperson Popo Maja has confirmed a nationwide shortage but said the department has imported alternatives to betanoid - dexamethasone and prednisone .

These drugs are not registered for use in South Africa and must be procured with special MCC permission.