

# Groote Schuur Hospital opens adolescent centre of excellence

On 16 March 2022, Groote Schuur Hospital (GSH) officially opened its Adolescent Centre of Excellence to serve young people, between the ages of 13 and 18, in the Western Cape.



Source: Supplied.

This is another proud milestone for the hospital as this is the first facility of its kind in the province.

This public-health facility will be providing a holistic package of care to patients who are referred from other facilities in the province. The services have been structured to be adolescent friendly through the use of peer support. Apart from general adolescent clinics, the service primarily serves to assist these young adults to deal with chronic illnesses, ensure that they understand the need to be compliant in taking their medication and to offer them counselling services both as individuals and through group therapy.

“The launch of this facility is very much aligned with the World Health Organisation directive and focus on adolescent health, notably with the understanding that investing in adolescent health today has multiple spin-offs in future-years. The idea is to provide a home for adolescents with long-term health care until they are ready to transition into adult services, as well as to provide a space for expert opinion and care for general adolescent medical conditions,” commented Dr Zakira M-Sablay, paediatrician at the facility.

## Adolescent centre aligned with NGOs

The department has also been able to partner with NGOs to make a difference at the facility. Currently South African College of Applied Psychology (SACAP) and TB-HIV Care are the two NGOs on board and they share the vision of addressing the critical gap in mental health services for adolescents.

On-site counsellors will provide counselling for adolescents once a week, in addition to the services of a newly established Adolescent Psychiatric Outpatient Department Clinic for non-acute psychiatric conditions.

“The primary purpose of the SACAP foundation is to address the inadequate provision of mental healthcare services in South Africa. The foundation seeks to be a positive force for change, oriented towards social justice and addressing the wide gap that exists between mental-health service needs and available quality provision in disadvantaged and marginalised communities.

Mental-health problems represent the largest burden of disease in young people, and in joining hands with the Western Cape Government and Groote Schuur Hospital, The SACAP foundation is honoured to be assisting in providing integrated care to the adolescents of the Western Cape,” said Kim Starkey, counselling psychologist for SACAP.

“TB-HIV Care is involved in several primary healthcare programmes in the Western Cape, notably addressing tailored service delivery for youth. The organisation was understandably eager to synergise with Groote Schuur Hospital on the Adolescent Centre of Excellence. We did so by placing service-delivery teams at this wonderful youth-friendly establishment, with a focus on finding missing TB cases and providing supportive preventative and therapeutic care.

## **Meeting the unique needs of adolescents**

“The participating stakeholders understand the importance of providing a variety of services based on the unique needs of youth to ensure they access the health interventions needed for our country's future leaders,” said Dr Laurene Booyens, chief programme officer, TB-HIV Care.

Western Cape Minister of Health, Dr NomaFrench Mbombo advises that: “A wise youth knows their health status. I started this year engaging with young people through Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVETs). There are eight priorities that have been identified regarding young people:

- \* HIV/TB and Sexually Transmitted Infections
- \* Covid-19
- \* Gender-Based Violence
- \* Mental health
- \* Sexual reproductive health, maternal health and contraception.
- \* Disability
- \* LGBTQI+ residents
- \* Alcohol and drug-abuse prevention.

“To my delight this centre covers all the above, and it's about youth empowerment. It will assist young people to make healthy decisions. There will also be interactions with parents. I see it also empowering families. This is innovation as the best intervention of dealing with social determinants of health,” said Mbombo.