



The Health Minister Dr Aaron Motsoaledi labeled public health practitioners as uncaring and added that patients deserved compassion, love, warm smiles and soothing hands at a Nurses Day celebration in Seshego, Limpopo. It was sad that the Minister had to reprimand nurses at our celebrations by telling nurses that patients should not

be reduced "to people who were just collecting medication or wanting injections". Is it really necessary for nurses to be threatened by the appointment of a Health Ombudsman, is that the only way to get the members of the nursing profession to refocus on the core values of nursing?

Caring keeps on being the centre of media reports and the topic of discussion at work groups and conferences. Where do we as nurses' start with the process of addressing the so-called lack of caring and compassion? Do we really need to call for a caring statement for the nurses of South Africa; if yes where do we start and how do we get the buy-in of the profession?

Nursing, and therefore caring, is perceived differently by health consumers. Each patient or client has his/her own expectation and view of what caring must or should be. The expectations of each individual are influenced by his/her specific circumstances, including but not limited to previous healthcare experiences, illness, culture, personality, support systems and the conditions of living. If a person's perception of caring can differ how can caring then be measured? The use of patient feedback surveys are valuable to measure waiting times, availability of medication and stock, the quality of the food and general view on the services. An effective measuring tool to measure caring and the way an individual experiences care is not readily available and

such a tool must be developed taking into account the culture and the expectations of those being measured.

South Africa is not unique in the war against disease and the treatment thereof. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)² must be addressed in our plans for the future. We as a nursing profession in South Africa will have to realise that nursing is the backbone of the healthcare system and that we have to reclaim our standing in society. The seventeen SDGs all influence health and the delivery of healthcare and we have to be serious about developing and implementing plans to achieve these goals.

It is extremely important for us to work within the framework of the SDGs in order to achieve the main aim of the Department of Health – i.e., *A Long and Healthy Life for all South Africans*. The National Development Plan identified the four highways that have to be addressed to achieve our main aim:

- A huge burden of HIV and AIDS and TB ;
- A burden of Maternal and Child Mortality;
- An ever exploding burden of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) or diseases of lifestyle which is threatening to get out of control globally; and
- Injury, violence and trauma, especially on our roads.

Let us all in health care take hands and make a difference not only to our immediate communities, but also the future of mankind.

References

1. Makhubu, N. 2016. Nurses' enraged by 'devils in white' statement. Pretoria News 16 May 2016. Available at <http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/nurses-enraged-by-devils-in-white-statement-2022101>
2. United Nations. 2015. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Available at <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

