



HEALTH

KwaZulu-Natal

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Reference: 16/11/3
Enquiries: Mr SML Jikijela
Date: 12 June 2009

Yves Chartier, World Health Organization
Joshua Karliner, Health Care Without Harm
WHO/HCWH Mercury-Free Health Care Partnership
c/o Salud sin Daño/HCWH International Coordination
Tamborini 2838
1429 Capital Federal
Argentina

Dear Mssrs. Chartier and Karliner,

Invitation to Join the WHO and HCWH Partnership

Thank you for the invitation to join the Mercury-free Health Care Partnership, co-led by World Health Organization and Health Care Without Harm.

We understand that this is a global partnership aimed to achieve virtual elimination of mercury-based thermometers and sphygmomanometers over the next decade and their substitution with accurate, economically viable alternatives.

We also understand that this initiative is a component of the United Nations Environment Programme's Mercury Products Partnership. As such, this Mercury-free Health Care Partnership initiative will contribute to a broader effort of promoting environmental health by reducing the amount of mercury emitted into the global environment.

Our institution, the KwaZulu-Natal provincial Department of Health, has been involved since the turn of the 21st century in activities aimed at doing-away with mercury-based medical devices. These activities (in January 2003), included:

- communicating to all hospital managers and clinical practitioners about hazards and developments relating to the use of devices and/or products containing mercury in health institutions,
- stopping procurement of new mercury column sphygmomanometers,
- phasing-out mercury sphygmomanometers and issuing new specifications for aneroid type sphygmomanometers,
- running tests to evaluate several other types of blood pressure measuring devices.

These activities also included recommending, in June 2005, that only digital thermometers could be procured and providing specifications for such devices. The mercury-based thermometers were phased-out by exchanging all mercury-based devices for digital devices on a one-for-one basis, and sourcing the services of a reputable waste management company to collect, store and possibly dispose of the mercury-based devices.

uMnyango Wezempilo . Departement van Gesondheid


Fighting Disease, Fighting Poverty, Giving Hope

I write you today to accept your invitation and express our willingness to join the Partnership. As part of the Mercury-free Health Care Partnership the KwaZulu-Natal provincial Department of Health will continue its efforts by:

- continuing to use non-mercury based devices in our health facilities,
- continuing to collect all stock-piles of mercury-based devices from our health facilities,
- investigating environmentally-friendly ways of disposing mercury-based devices, and
- intensifying our efforts to educate all our clinical practitioners, health promoters and educators, patients and communities, about the dangers of mercury.

While looking forward to collaborating with you on this important initiative, we'd like to draw your attention to the fact that we are a provincial health administration, international partnerships and/or collaborations are a purview of the national government and we take our cue from them.

Sincerely,



Mr WD Khanyile
Manager: Environmental Health
KZN Department of Health