# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 1918**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 18)**

**Mr M K Montwedi (EFF) to ask the Minister of Health:**

What are the relevant details of the form of pre‑ and post‑counselling his department offers to patients diagnosed with cancer? **NW2175E**

**REPLY:**

Pre -, during and post-counselling services are an essential component of treatment of patients with cancer. Counselling is provided by their treating doctor, including the Medical and Radiation Oncologists, as well as the multidisciplinary palliative care team of which social workers are key team members. Counselling is prioritised in palliative care services which commences at the point of diagnosis of the cancer and continues throughout the continuum to ensure that the patient lives a quality life for as long as possible.

**Counselling for Cancer Patients:**

1. Diagnostic Counselling: Patients who receive cancer diagnosis undergo diagnostic counselling, which involves discussing the diagnosis, its implications, and potential treatment options. This counselling aims to provide emotional support, answer questions, and help the patient understand the next steps.
2. Treatment Decision Counselling: The Department recognises that cancer treatment often involves making important decisions. Patients are presented with treatment options counselling which including the benefits, risks, and potential side effects of each option. Health care workers may help the patient to weigh their options and make informed decisions based on their preferences and medical advice.
3. Emotional Support: Patients diagnosed with cancer are offered social service counselling through social workers/psychologist within the health care facility. Emotional support pre-counselling services includes emotional, and where available, spiritual support to help patients and their families cope with fear, anxiety, and stress related to their diagnosis. Counsellors may provide guidance on managing emotions, communicating with loved ones, and accessing additional support resources.
4. Post-Treatment Counselling: After completing cancer treatment, it is recommended that patients undergo post-treatment counselling. This counselling focuses on addressing the emotional and psychological effects of cancer, such as post-treatment anxiety, fear of recurrence, or coping with physical changes. The counselling provides a space for patients to discuss their concerns, learn coping strategies, and adjust to life after treatment.
5. Survivorship counselling: Some Tertiary Hospitals in collaboration with other Stakeholders, do offer survivorship programs that provide long-term support to individuals who have completed treatment. These programs may include counselling sessions to address survivorship issues, including emotional and spiritual well-being, managing risk behaviour, monitoring for late effects or complications of treatment, and transitioning back to daily life. These facilities include *eg Steve Biko , Charlotte Maxeke, Inkosi Albert Luthuli, Groote Schuur, Chris Hani Baragwanath, Red Cross Memorial, Kind Edward VIII and Universitas Academic Hospitals*).

Palliative Care: For patients with advanced cancer or those nearing the end of life, palliative care counselling can be provided in collaboration with palliative care Stakeholders (Hospice, Frail Care facilities, Home based palliative care services). This form of counselling focuses on improving quality of life, managing symptoms, discussing end-of-life preferences, and providing emotional support to patients and their families.

END.