# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 1954**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 19)**

**Ms N N Chirwa (EFF) to ask the Minister of Health:**

With reference to orthopaedic surgery backlogs that continue to haunt the Free State due to the high demand of services, a shortage of specialists and operating theatre time, (a) what plans does he have in place to (i) resolve the shortage of specialists to address the orthopaedic surgery backlog in the Free State and (ii) solve the crisis of operating theatre times that also influences the orthopaedic surgeries backlog and (b) by what date is it envisaged that the interventions would become a reality? **NW2170E**

**REPLY:**

(a) (i) The Free State Provincial Department of Health has informed the Minister that it is engaging in a number of interventions to solve the shortage of specialists to address the orthopaedic surgery backlog. This amongst others includes:

* Creating of more nursing posts and headhunting of more Specialists with relevant experience is underway and it is envisaged that more staff will be recruited in the next few months;
* Requested the National Department of Health to recruited Orthopaedic Specialists through the Nelson Mandela Fidel Castro Government to Government Agreement;
* Improvement of appointment practices to minimise delays that could deter applicants (Reduced from 6 weeks to 2 weeks);
* Filling of critical posts to enable increased theatre time;
* Increased Theatre Capacity – from 3 to 5 elective Orthopaedic list;
* Outreach to neighbouring Hospitals both Orthopaedic Wards and Theatre immediately; and
* Increase pool of Specialists in the Province in conjunction with the Academic Hospital.

(ii) In solving the crisis of operating theatre times that also influences the orthopaedic surgeries backlog, the Province is/has-

* Rationalised the budget and prioritize relevant surgical equipment and services;
* Strengthen the Outreach Programme at Level 1 Hospital by increasing rate outreach to lower levels of care;
* Encourages the improvement on theatre time and usage;
* Increased the usage of back-up generators during load shedding or unscheduled power cuts;
* Surgical marathons or blitzes;
* Improved monitoring of the backlogs through an electronic system;
* Better management of Theatre time through improving efficiencies;
* Developed and implemented a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) on optimum Theatre Utilization;
* Strengthened Theatre User Committee with attendance by Head Specialists and Matrons; and
* The budget for orthopaedic implants to continue these services and increase arthroplasties (Total Hip & Knee Replacements) has been increased in the current financial year.

(b) The above-mentioned interventions are being implemented simultaneously to address the orthopaedic surgery backlog, even though a specific date of realizing the ultimate goal cannot be stated, the monitoring of the backlogs through the electronic system will be able to inform of progress being made.

END.