# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 70**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 01)**

**Mrs M B Hicklin (DA) to ask the Minister of Health:**

(1) What measures are in place for healthcare workers working in State hospitals to access mental health wellness programmes;

(2) what provision is there for healthcare workers suffering from COVID-19 burnout to access mental health medical leave;

(3) what provision has his department made to (a) prevent hospital management from marginalising staff who admit to needing mental health leave as a result of the extreme pressures they have been subjected to as a result of COVID-19 and the loss of life they have seen in the past 20 months and (b) reduce stigma attached to mental health medical leave?

###### NW74E

**REPLY:**

1. State hospitals have employee wellness programmes which are aimed at supporting the staff that have any workplace-related health problems including those who have mental health problems. These programmes are staffed by professionals who are trained in Employee wellness, including mental health support. Whenever there are staff members who are faced with a case that is beyond their level of expertise, they refer such cases to the relevant professionals for further management.
2. Health care workers who are suffering from Covid-19 burnout are managed on the case-by-case basis, as the situation differs from person to person. Whenever cases are reported in the health establishments, these are referred to the Employee Wellness programme manager, who makes a determination on the recommendation for leave of absence. Some of these health care workers make use of family doctors and such cases have been accepted by health establishments as genuine cases deserving leave.

(3) (a) The department has no record of any hospital management that has marginalised staff who admit to needing mental health leave as a result of the extreme pressures they have been subjected to as a result of COVID-19, and loss of life they have seen in the past 20 months. To the contrary, the department has been very appreciative of all health care workers including hospital managers who have equally been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

(b) The department is also not aware that there have been people that were stigmatised as a result of being in need of mental medical leave. The department is working on the sector wide productivity management and wellness services as part of post Covid-19, management for psycho-social support and reintegration.

END.