

Review

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LEAD FROM THE BACK – AND LET OTHERS BELIEVE THEY ARE IN FRONT – NELSON MANDELA



Community member and owner of Flutter By Nursery, Bill Rutherford stands next to signage that shows the lives lost in the Life Esidimeni tragedy.

Crosses commemorate lives lost in tragedy

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About 144 crosses can be seen alongside Main Road in Kyalami as they serve as a reminder of the 144 lives lost in the Life Esidimeni tragedy, according to community member Bill Rutherford who erected the crosses outside his property at Flutter By Nursery.

Last year, the tragedy shook the country after the ill-treatment of mentally ill patients, who were moved by Gauteng Health Department's marathon project from Life Esidimeni facilities to various NGOs allegedly without most of the patients' families' knowledge, came to light.

In order to give closure to the grieving families, there were ongoing hearings about the deaths following the transfer of 1 700 patients to ill-equipped NGOs.

"The reason behind me putting crosses outside my yard is because I was heartbroken to see how people were being treated during this Life Esidimeni tragedy, which has affected me badly because I have lost faith in our health department."

He explained that he was saddened by how the patients and victims were treated and, according to him, no one has face any consequences. "These crosses will stay here until someone takes accountability for the lives lost during this tragedy. I put them up last year when they started the hearings."

Rutherford explained that almost every day motorists stop by and put flowers down which, according to him, is their way to commemorate the lives lost in the tragedy.

When contacted for comment, head of communications of Gauteng Department of Health, Lesemang Matuka stated that unfortunately there are still missing patients.

"What was ordered to us by Judge Moseneke was to erect monuments in commemoration of the lives lost in the tragedy and the department is continuously searching for the missing patients in all facilities they could be in."

Matuka highlighted that they had some leads they planned to follow to verify the information and only after verification, will the patients be removed from the list of missing people.

The role of cannabis oil in the fight against cancer

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Cannabis oil for medical use came to the fore again when the Forever Changed Global Awareness Campaign hosted its second press conference at the Palazzo Hotel at Montecasino on 12 July as part of the fight against cancer.

The organisation was started by Addi Lang four years ago after she was diagnosed with late-stage breast cancer and is dedicated to helping those afflicted by the disease, as well as to call for better access to alternative treatment options and the inclusion of cancer policies in the workplace.

Among the presenters on the day were Narend Singh, chief whip for the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in Parliament, and advocate Anthony Mitchell of the same organisation, who addressed the current legal status of cannabis.

"I met Addi Lang a few years ago, and I am very impressed with the passion she has for the tasks she has taken on, on the behalf of thousands in this country," Singh told *Fourways Review*.

"The Medical Innovation Bill, which calls for the legalisation of cannabis for medical use, was spearheaded by Mario Oriani-Ambrosini in 2014.

"After Oriani-Ambrosini passed away [from cancer] I continued the work he started. He and I wanted to see people have access to alternative medicine, as people should have the freedom of choice when it comes to medical treatment."

Singh and his supporters want to see cannabis oil legalised so that it can be used to treat pain and in cases of palliative care. The substance is currently available, but selling and buying it is not yet legal and he has concerns about the quality and regulation of the substance.

"We decided to withdraw the [Medical Innovation] Bill after last year's court ruling [in the Western Cape High Court regarding marijuana].

"The Department of Health is currently reviewing about 20 applications for a licence to grow the plant, but it is a long process. We are not just concerned about cannabis, but rather the innovation of medicine generally."

Besides addresses from Singh and Mitchell, the conference also saw discussions about how businesses can support those fighting the disease, ways in which cervical and breast cancer can be screened for and a screening of the *Forever Changed* documentary.



Narend Singh, chief whip in Parliament and a member of the IFP, addresses the press conference about the status of the Medical Innovation Bill. Photos: Robyn Kirk



Advocate Anthony Mitchell, chief of staff for the IFP, also discusses the use of medical cannabis oil.



A number of attendees take part in the Forever Changed Global Awareness Campaign's second press conference at the Palazzo Hotel at Montecasino.



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