



Rural Doctors Association of Southern Africa
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To Honourable President of South Africa:

Dear President Zuma,

We, the Rural Doctors' Association of Southern Africa, would like to re-confirm the invitation sent to your office on Friday the 12th of February by the Rural Health Advocacy Project (a partnership between Wits Centre for Rural Health, RuDASA and AIDS Law Project) to shadow a rural doctor for a day. This invitation was also sent to the Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Heads of Department for Health and Finance and all equivalent MECs and HoDs in the provinces. The invitation was accompanied by a set of recommendations how to achieve equity in health care as rural communities are severely disadvantaged.

We would be honored to receive you and your Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Health and Finance (as well as any other Ministers who feel so inclined), and all other Members of the Finance Min Mec and the National Health Council to accompany us for a day in our work— without prior warning to staff or management of said hospital (so no fake sprucing up occurs), and without speeches or lunches with the CEO and management – just simply following a doctor around as a silent observer to see the challenges we and our long-suffering patients face on a daily basis.

We are aware that many provinces and their Departments of Health are in significant financial crisis, and welcome the Minister of Health's announcement at the recent Health Leaders' Retreat on 26 January that 'Quality and Efficiency' should be prioritized, especially at the Primary Health Care level, with a central role for expenditure control, equity and efficiency. Yet we are concerned that as attempts are made to use resources more wisely and less wastefully for the delivery of healthcare in our national health system, rural hospitals will again draw the short end of the straw, as happened in KwaZulu-Natal at the end of last year when all, even critical posts, were frozen and it became virtually impossible to replace medical doctors who left rural hospitals. We believe firmly that for our public health service to recover from its present state, District Hospitals need to be strengthened as the core around which Primary Health Care clinics deliver grassroots care to communities, and urge you and your government to make adequate resources available and improve financial and budgetary processes affecting such hospitals.

As rural doctors, we are at the coalface of healthcare delivery to the Nation. On a daily basis, we are confronted by poverty, illness, suffering and unnecessary death, but also by the hope and dignity of our patients. We believe that all politicians, and senior public servants, have something to learn from the people that we are privileged to serve, and hope that you and many of your ministers, MECs and Heads of Departments will take up this invitation.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Karl le Roux, Chairperson.

Ps. To book a visit in your preferred province, please contact me on the numbers above.
CC: Ministers of Finance and Health, MECs and Heads of Departments for Finance and Health

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