



health

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
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MEDIA STATEMENT

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DEPARTMENT REJECTS UNFOUNDED ALLEGATIONS REGARDING RESEARCH UNIT BUDGET AND ACTIVITIES

The Mpumalanga Department of Health notes the media statement issued by the Democratic Alliance alleging that the Department paid R2.1 million for research that “never materialized” and that officials in the Research Unit were “paid for doing nothing”.

The Department rejects these allegations as incorrect, unfounded and not supported by the full information placed before the Portfolio Committee on Health. The statement is based on a selective reading of the Department’s response and creates an impression that it is not factual.

The facts on the R2.1 million allocation

The R2.1 million referred to in the allegation is not payment for an outsourced research project. It is not a tender, consultancy fee, invoice, or payment to a service provider for a research report. It is the approved Compensation of Employees allocation for permanent officials appointed in approved posts within the Department’s Research Unit.

The Research Unit consists of a Director, a Deputy Director and an Administrative Clerk. These officials form part of the Department’s approved organisational structure under Integrated Health Planning. To describe their approved salary allocation as payment for “research that never materialised” is therefore factually incorrect.

The Department was transparent in its response that no internal research study was conducted during the 2025/26 financial year. However, that statement cannot reasonably be interpreted to mean that the Research Unit was inactive, that officials did no work, or that public funds were spent without value. The work of a provincial research governance unit is broader than producing an internal study in a single financial year.

Work performed by the Research Unit

The Research Unit performs governance, ethics, compliance, coordination, monitoring and capacity-building functions that are essential to responsible health research in the province. These functions protect patients, support researchers, ensure ethical compliance and assist the Department to use evidence in planning and service delivery.

- Research applications:** The unit has managed 283 research applications on the National Health Research Database from 2024 to date, including the processing of applications,

support to applicants and compliance with applicable research requirements.

- Research and Ethics Committees:** The unit serves as secretariat to the Research Committee and the Research Ethics Committee. Both committees held four quarterly meetings, as well as interim meetings, to review applications and attend to research governance matters.

- Monitoring of active research and clinical trials:** The unit physically monitored two clinical research sites in Witbank and Middelburg and followed up on active research by obtaining progress reports from researchers.

- Training and research support:** The unit publishes a quarterly research review, Research Recap, which is distributed to Departmental employees. It has also conducted training on research processes and proposal development, while providing applicants with support throughout the research process.

These are real, measurable and necessary functions. They cannot be dismissed as “nothing” simply because the Department did not complete an internal research study during the 2025/26 financial year.

Research outputs and current work

The Department has also produced research work that has informed service delivery. During the 2024/25 financial year, the Department conducted an internal study on the implementation of the Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Guidelines. The study resulted in operational improvements, including training for doctors and nurses on the effective management of complaints and improved Quality Improvement Plans.

The Department has further planned two studies for the 2026/27 financial year: Evaluating Operational Inefficiencies in Public Hospitals and Understanding Specialist Departures in Mpumalanga Province. These studies are intended to support evidence-based recommendations to improve hospital efficiency and inform strategies to retain medical specialists.

Clarification on the allegations

The Department places the following on record:

1. **It is incorrect** to claim that R2.1 million was paid for a research project or report that was not delivered. The amount relates to approved personnel costs.
2. **It is incorrect** to claim that officials were paid for doing nothing. The Research Unit has performed documented governance, ethics, monitoring, application-management, training and support functions.
3. **It is unfounded** to label the approved Compensation of Employees allocation as fruitless and wasteful expenditure. No competent authority has made such a finding.

The Department respects the oversight role of the Legislature, the Public Service Commission and all lawful accountability institutions. The Department will cooperate fully with any legitimate request for information. However, public accountability must be based on complete and accurate facts, not on conclusions drawn from an incomplete interpretation of a formal response.

The Department remains committed to strengthening research governance, ethical oversight, evidence-based planning and service-delivery improvement in Mpumalanga. The Research Unit is an operational component of this work and continues to provide value through coordination, compliance, monitoring, training and support to research activity across the province.

The Department therefore rejects the allegations as unfounded and calls for the public record to



reflect the full facts provided to the Legislature.

ENDS



Issued by the Communication Directorate. For any inquiries, please contact Mr. Chris Nobela 0828879465/ Sharon Nkosi MEC's Spokesperson 078 317 9518