'Disgruntled doctors quit public sector'

Cape Argus, 15 June 2010

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DOCTORS are voting with their feet and leaving the public service, says Dr Phophi Ramathuba, the chairman of the SA Medical Association (Sama) public sector doctors' committee.

"In January we lost plus-minus 1 300 members from the public sector," she said. "The majority have left to the private sector. I think it's 1 200."

Yesterday it emerged that Leratong Hospital on the West Rand had lost 17 doctors this year.

One of them, who asked for her name to be withheld, said she had worked there for several years but could no longer cope with the long hours and heavy workload.

Gauteng Finance MEC Mandla Nkomfe, on behalf of Health MEC Qedani Mahlangu, has told the Gauteng Legislature that the Leratong Hospital staff crisis could be blamed on bad management.

He said he had received many complaints from patients about their treatment there.

Gauteng Health Department spokesman Mandla Sidu said there was no crisis at the hospital. "These doctors resigned over a period. They all have their own reasons," he said.

Ramathuba said doctors were unhappy about the implementation of the occupation-specific dispensation (OSD) and because of problems with hospital management. Hospitals needed skilled managers, not deployed cadres who were "not really qualified to manage the hospitals - that is a fact".

"You speak to a CEO to say: 'I need an incubator', and the CEO says: 'No, I need to buy a plasma screen for my office.' You report these things to the authorities - nobody cares or seems to be taking charge."

Ramathuba said doctors were left to explain the health system failure to the bereaved.

"It is us who write the death certificate, it's not the politicians... And most of these deaths are caused because we don't have proper management," Ramathuba said.