



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

# PATIENT CHARTER

*'Your Health Our Concern'*

What you can expect from your health service providers and what you can do to help us assist you

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# 1. Glossary

The terms referred to in this document are defined as follows:

**Service user:** we use the term 'service user' to include:

People who use health and social care services as clients, patients, parents

Organisations and communities that represent the interest of people who use health and social care services

Members of the public and communities who are potential users of health services and social care interventions

**The term 'service user'** also takes account of the diversity of people in our society, regardless of age, colour, race, ethnicity or nationality, religion, disability, gender, who may have different needs and concerns. We use the term service user in general, but occasionally use the term patient where appropriate.

**Health:** a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (World Health Organization 1948).

**Charter:** a Statement of Commitment by the Ministry of Health and Social Services on healthcare expectations and responsibilities. Outlining what service users can and should expect every time they use health services and what service users can do to help deliver safer and more effective health services in Namibia.

**Expectations:** what service users expect to experience when they use health services in Namibia.

**Health responsibilities:** the duty of people to do their best to maintain and improve their health, to respect the health of others and to support the health and social care services to run efficiently.

**Predictable:** knowing what to expect from a procedure, treatment and all Namibia health and social care services.

**Health services:** all Namibia health and social care services delivered from Primary, Secondary and Tertiary levels.



## 2. Introduction

The Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) is committed to develop a Patient Charter.

The Patient Charter, which is titled **Your Health Our Concern**, has been developed with input from many interested parties, including Health Professional Council of Namibia (HPCNA), World Health Organisation (WHO) and various other NGO's.

It is part of a series of quality improvement initiatives designed to involve service users in influencing the quality of healthcare in Namibia. The MoHSS is actively inviting service users to get involved on patient forums and quality improvement initiatives and invites service users to contact the Quality Assurance Unit MoHSS at Head Office, to find out about how they can become involved in improving the quality of healthcare in Namibia.

### **Your Health Our Concern**

what is it? It is a Statement of Commitment by the MoHSS describing that the Ministry is taking the health of the Namibian people seriously and how the service users can expect when using

public health services in Namibia and what they can do to help the Ministry of Health and Social Services deliver more effective and safe services. It is based on eight principles which underpins high quality and people-centred care.

It aims to inform and empower individuals, families and communities to actively look after their own health and to influence the quality of healthcare in Namibia.

### **Your Health Our Concern**

what does it do? Enhance service delivery and customer satisfaction.

We are about our people's health care.

We strive to partner with our communities in delivery of quality and sustainable health service.

Develop, maintain and sustain quality health services to meet the needs of our people.



### 3. Foreword

The development of this document constituted full consultation of numerous stakeholders. As part of the process detailed and valuable feedback was received and welcomed with the goal of Implementation of the National Strategy; that is, from service users, staff, the management team of the Ministry of Health and Social Services, and regulatory bodies.

Implementation of Your Health Our Concern will be monitored through gathering of patient feedback on their experience of services as described in this document. This will enable the MoHSS to improve the quality of care for you the service user and to demonstrate it is delivering person-centred care and support.

Detailed implementation plans are currently being developed in partnership with service users and the MoHSS. A programme of awareness raising,



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**Hon. Dr. Bernard S. Haufiku (MP)**  
*Minister of Health and Social Services*

promotional materials and communications for service users will be available at all MoHSS facilities across the country.

Your Health our Concern will be reviewed annually to ensure that the content of the document is in line with new policy changes or developments in healthcare. Feedback in relation to this document is always welcome and can be sent to our Quality Assurance Unit at National Level.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who gave their time so generously in developing this document and especially all of those who submitted very detailed feedback during the consultation period.

We look forward to working in partnership with all stakeholders to ensure that **Your Health Our Concern** makes a real difference to the service user's experience of Namibia's health and social care services.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andreas S. Mwoombola'.

**Dr. Andreas S. Mwoombola**  
*Permanent Secretary*

## 4. Our Core Values

- **Confidentiality:** To keep patients/clients' information confidential and use it only for the purpose of treatment, unless legally obliged to do otherwise  
Not to divulge information relating to client organizations to a third party without consent
- **Empathy and Caring:** Treat patients/clients equally, Provide care and support to clients as if they were members of one's own family
- **Honesty, Integrity and Dignity:** All patients/clients have the right to;  
Be treated with respect at all times  
Have their values, culture, religion, and dignity respected at all times  
Be listened to and be heard  
Privacy during consultation, physical examination and treatment.  
We are truthful to ourselves and to the public and adhering to a strict moral or ethical code
- **Impartiality:** Treat all patients/clients equally, irrespective of status, religion, political belief, race, colour, gender and sexuality
- **Professionalism:** Promote professionalism across board, Ensure the health professional code is adhered to
- **Respect:** We show non deferential regard for our clients and colleagues and self-esteem
- **Transparency and accountability:** Strive to be truthful and open to our clients in all our endeavours
- **Innovation and creativity:** Promote innovation, new ideas and creativity to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of health care programmes
- **Customer focus:** Our customer satisfaction shall be our priority

*'Your Health Our Concern'*



## 5. Patient Charter

Your Health Our Concern is a statement of commitment by the MoHSS describing what you can expect when and wherever you use Public health services in Namibia, and what you can do to help the Ministry of Health and Social Services to deliver more effective and safe services.

What you can expect and what you can do to help:

- Access
- Dignity and Respect
- Safe and Effective Services
- Communication and Information
- Participation
- Privacy
- Improving Health
- Accountability
- Confidentiality
- Respect

Our services are organised to ensure equity of access to public health and social care services.

- We treat people with dignity, respect and compassion. We respect diversity of culture, beliefs and values in line with clinical decision making.

- We provide services with competence, skill and care in a safe environment, delivered by trusted professionals.
- We listen carefully and communicate openly and honestly, and provide clear, comprehensive and understandable health information and advice.
- We involve people and their families in shared decision making about their healthcare. We take account of people's preferences and values.
- We will do our best to ensure that you have adequate personal space, and privacy when you use our health services.
- We maintain strict confidentiality of personal information.
- Our services promote health, prevent disease and support and empower those with chronic conditions to self-manage their condition.
- We welcome your complaints, input and feedback about care and services, we will investigate your complaints and work to address your concerns.

- Treat staff and other patients with dignity, respect and consideration.
- Support us to deliver safe and effective services, e.g. if you think that a member of a healthcare team has forgotten to wash their hands, give them a gentle reminder.
- Help us to promote clear communication and information, if there is something that you do not understand, let us know and we will explain better.
- Ask questions and become more actively involved in decision making about your care.
- Support health services to safeguard patient confidentiality and privacy.
- Learn more about what you can do to improve your health, ask your healthcare provider for information about healthy living and about what support services are available in your community, ask your healthcare professional to help you to set goals for improving your health.

## 5.1 Access

Our services are organised to ensure that you have equity of access to public health and social care services.

## ■ WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- Ways by which you can help health services to be more accessible:
- Ensure to ask your healthcare professional how long you may expect to wait before receiving certain kinds of appointments, test or treatments.
- Using health services appropriately:
- **Only use emergency services in a real emergency.**

### Appointments:

- Please be on time for all appointments. If late, please phone ahead to let staff know.
- Ask your healthcare professional how long you may expect to wait before receiving certain kinds of appointments, test or treatments.
- If a member of staff (such as a community health nurse) is due to visit your home, please make sure you are there at the agreed time.
- If a member of staff phones you to arrange an appointment, please keep it unless you are contacted again to change it

- If you cannot keep an appointment, inform your healthcare provider in plenty of time so that your appointment can be given to someone else.
- If you have any special requirements, such as alternative methods of communication, please let healthcare services know in advance of visits where possible.

**Contact details:**

- Make sure that hospital or healthcare service you attend has up-to-date information about how to contact you. If you change address or phone number please inform all relevant healthcare providers as soon as possible.

## 5.2 Dignity and respect

We will treat you, your family with dignity, respect and compassion. We respect diversity of culture, beliefs and values in line with clinical decision making. Please treat staff with dignity respect and consideration.

### ■ WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

- Care that respects your culture, beliefs, values and other characteristics such as your age and gender, faith, political beliefs or disability and is in line with clinical decision making.

- Care that is provided in a sensitive, kind and compassionate way.
- End-of-life care that is dignified, comforting and supporting relief from suffering.

### ■ WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- Ways by which you can help promote dignity and respect in all healthcare services:
- Please treat healthcare staff politely and with respect and consideration.
- Please show consideration for patients in hospitals who may need time to rest and recover by adhering to hospital visiting hours. Find out about hospital visiting hours before planning to visit patients.

## 5.3 Safe and effective services

- We will provide services with competence, skill and care in a safe environment, delivered by trusted professionals for everybody. Support us in the delivery of safe and effective services. If you think that a member of a healthcare team has forgotten to wash their hands, please give them a gentle reminder.





*'Your Health Our Concern'*

## ■ WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

- Services that are provided with professional care, skill and competence.
- Informed and clinically appropriate care.
- That there will be continuity of care and smooth transitions between services which are involved in your care.
- That when you are referred from one part of the health service to another service or team, all relevant details of your health and care plan should be forwarded as appropriate.
- An environment where systems and structures work effectively to ensure patient safety and to ensure that your care is well coordinated.
- Healthcare professionals to do everything that they can to control your pain.
- Our services have processes in place to ensure safe healthcare is reliably delivered irrespective of the healthcare setting and healthcare-associated infection is prevented.

## ■ WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- Ways by which you can help promote safe and effective services: Patients and family members who are more informed and involved in their healthcare often experience safer and better care and have improved quality of life afterwards.

**To ensure that you or a member of your family receive the best care possible you should always:**

- ▶ Ask questions;
- ▶ Talk to your healthcare team;
- ▶ Listen and note down the information they give.

### **Medication safety:**

- Try to follow any advice or treatment that has been agreed with you.
- If you are worried about doing this, or do not fully understand what is required, discuss it with the person giving the advice or treatment.

### **Take care with medicines.**

- Take any medicine given to you in line with instructions and finish the course of treatment.

- Please discuss with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist, before you decide to change or stop your medication, particularly if your prescription indicate that you should continue to take it.
- Give any out-of-date or unused medicine to your pharmacist to dispose it safely
- Try to order repeat prescriptions in plenty of time.
- Store medicines safely and out of children's reach.
- If you go into hospital, let the staff know about any medicines you are already taking, including over the counter medicines (OTM), for example by bringing a list of all the medicines and giving this to a member of staff, and tell staff about any allergies that you may have.
- If you feel that your condition has got worse, you should consult your doctor or nurse He/She will reassess your condition and refer you if necessary.
- Help prevent the spread of infection:
- **Hand washing** is the best way to prevent germs spreading. Wash your hands after coughing/ sneezing, after going to the toilet, after touching anything wet (e.g. ooze from your wounds, urine from your catheter, your blood stained dressings) and before mealtimes.

- Wash your hands after shaking hands with other people.
- If you can't get to a sink to wash your hands, ask your healthcare staff to provide you with a means to clean your hands (e.g. basin of water and soap/wipes/alcohol hand rub) so that you can keep your hands clean.
- Avoid touching any wounds or the area around drips, drains or catheters.
- Ask your doctor or nurse to explain to you why you have a drip or catheter and how you can help prevent it getting infected. Let staff know if the area around the drip becomes sore or red or if the bandage falls off or looks wet or dirty.
- Understand that taking antibiotics will not help if you are diagnosed with a virus. We do not treat infections caused by viruses with antibiotics
- If you have diarrhea and are on an antibiotic or have recently been on one – let your doctor know.
- **If you are given a prescription for antibiotics to take at home, it is very important to take all your antibiotics as prescribed (i.e. finish the course) even if you begin to feel better.**
- **Do not keep antibiotics at home for future use and do not share them with other people.**



- If you think hospital premises are not as clean as they should be, let a member of staff know.
- If you think a staff member has forgotten to hand wash before examining you, give a reminder.

#### **When visiting a patient:**

- Do not sit on patients' bed and keep the number of visitors as low as possible at any time.
- Ask ward staff for advice before you bring the patient food or drink.
- Never touch dressings, drips or other equipment around the bed.

- Do not visit another patient in hospital if you have been sick recently, for example sore throat, high temperature, diarrhoea or a cold or flu-like illness.
- Do not take a child to visit someone in hospital if they have been sick recently for example sore throat, high temperature, diarrhoea, vomiting, or if they have a cold or flu like illness.

## 5.4 Communication and information

We will listen to you carefully and communicate openly and honestly, and provide clear, comprehensive and understandable health information and advice.

### ■ WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

- Open and appropriate communication throughout your care: – about what is wrong and what the treatment or care aims to do; – concerning the result of any proposed treatment and medication, including the possible risks and alternatives; – regarding the type of continuing healthcare you may need, including medication, continuing care in hospital, timely and appropriate referrals, rehabilitation; –



regarding what discharge arrangements are in place and, when appropriate, – especially when plans change or if something goes wrong.

#### **You should be given:**

- The opportunity to ask questions and to receive answers that you can understand.
- Advice on how to ask questions and how to make the most of consultations and obtain information about diagnosis, treatment and care from members of the healthcare team.
- Information in a language that you can understand.
- Access to interpretative services where possible.
- Staff should always introduce themselves wear name badges .
- The name and role of everyone who cares for you, and the name of who is in charge of your care.
- Relevant information leaflets to help you understand your illness and/or how you can prevent infection.

#### **You can expect health information about:**

- How to look after yourself and prevent further illness.
- The services and sources of help (such as further information and self-help groups) that are available.

- Support in managing a chronic (long-term) condition.
- The estimated waiting times for a health provider's services and, where known, information about alternative service providers.
- What you can expect to happen to you on the day of any intervention such as a CT scan or ultrasound.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP**

- Ways by which you can support improved communication:
- If there is something that you do not understand about a condition or treatment, let your healthcare professional know. Never be afraid to ask.
- If you are able, you should provide information about your history, current treatment, medication and alternative therapies directly. Otherwise, your family, or other nominated support person should provide the healthcare team with this information. It may be helpful for you to carry the information with you.
- As a patient, you should follow plans that have been agreed with your healthcare provider and report any changes in your condition.

## 5.5 Active Participation

We will involve you and your family in decision making about your healthcare and will take account of your preferences and values.

### ■ WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

- To be involved in making informed decisions about treatment and care to the degree and extent that you choose.
- To involve your family, or other nominated support people in your healthcare treatment.
- To give informed consent before any procedure following discussion of the options available to you, especially their expected results, success rates and possible side effects.
- To seek a second opinion at any time during your care (your doctor can assist you in seeking a second opinion if required).

### ■ WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- Ways by which you can support participation:
- Prepare a list of questions, concerns and symptoms to discuss with your doctor or healthcare professional. Here

are a few suggested questions to get you started: – “Can you please tell me more about my condition?” – “Do you have any information that I can take away with me?” – “Can you tell me where I can find out more information?” – “Why do I need to have this particular test?” – “What are the different treatments for this condition?” – “How will this treatment help me?” – “What does the treatment involve?” – “What are the risks of this treatment?” – “What is likely to happen if I do not have this treatment?” – “What should I look out for?” – “What can I do to help myself?” – “When should I come back to see you?”.

- Ask what the treatment plan is before discharge and for it to be explained to you.
- Make sure you get the results of any tests or procedures.
- If having surgery, clarify with your surgeon that everyone is clear about exactly what is going to be done.

## 5.6 Privacy and Confidentiality

We will do our best to ensure that you have adequate personal space and privacy when you use our health services. We maintain strict confidentiality of personal information.



## ■ WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

- To obtain and inspect a copy of your health information.
- Your personal health information will be stored securely and not disclosed to others without your consent. Your personal health information will only be accessed by those who need it for patient care.
- To be facilitated to complain if you are unhappy with how health services have used or protected your health information.
- To be given enough personal space when being examined, receiving treatment and when discussing your condition and treatment.
- That your healthcare records may be accessed for audit purposes to provide assurance to the hospital about the quality of service provision.

## ■ WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- Ways by which you can support the health service in safeguarding patient confidentiality:

- Support the health service in safeguarding patient confidentiality by respecting the privacy of fellow service users.

## 5.7 Improving health

Our services are designed to promote your health, prevent disease and support and empower those with chronic conditions to self-manage their condition.

## ■ WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

- Information and advice on how to stay as healthy as possible, and the necessary support and encouragement to do so.



- Information, advice and support on how to best self-manage an existing health problem.
- The opportunity to take part in screening and immunisation programmes to prevent illness where available and appropriate.
- Information on rehabilitation programmes where available and appropriate.
- The prevention of infection to be a priority for all healthcare services and providers.

## ■ WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

Ways by which you can support the health service to improve your health:

- Learn more about what you can do to improve your health, and that of others. Ask your healthcare provider for information about healthy living and about the support services in your community, ask your healthcare professional to help you to set goals to improve your health.
- Look after your own health and have a healthy lifestyle. This could mean: – taking more exercise; – eating a healthy diet; –



managing weight; – stopping smoking; – not drinking too much alcohol; – not using drugs. Reduction in salt and sugar intake.

- Seek information and advice from any healthcare professional or other sources on how to prevent disease, including immunisation, and on how to protect your health.
- Monitor your health and report any changes to your healthcare team.
- Seek assistance from support groups and people living with similar conditions.

- Talk to your healthcare team about self-management when living with a chronic medical condition.
- Help stop the spread of infection: wash and dry your hands before preparing and or eating food.
- All health facilities in Namibia are declared smoke free environment.

## 5.8 Accountability

We will welcome your complaints and feedback about your care and experience of services. We will investigate your complaints and work to address your concerns.

### ■ WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

- To comment on the care you have received.
- Information about how to give feedback about your experience of care, whether it was positive or negative.
- To have your concerns dealt with properly and in a timely manner.
- To receive feedback in relation to what changes or improvements have been made in response to your complaint or feedback.

- If you are unhappy with the way in which your complaint was dealt with, you can request a review from the Quality Assurance division at National level. They will appoint a review officer to examine your request for review.

### ■ WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- your feedback matters help us to improve our services by giving us your views, including your comments, complaints and suggestions. You can do this by talking to staff or filling in surveys.

**“YOUR HEALTH OUR CONCERN”**



*'Your Health Our Concern'*

## NOTES