

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA condemns allegations of sexual assault by doctor against patients at Madadeni Hospital in KwaZulu-Natal
DATE	05 May 2026
EMBARGO	None
ENQUIRIES	communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) strongly condemns allegations of sexual assault by a doctor against patients at Madadeni Hospital outside Newcastle in KwaZulu-Natal.

Four patients reported these allegations to the police, and the doctor has been apprehended and will appear in court. These serious allegations are in breach of trust, and raise ethical, legal, and human rights concerns. Healthcare facilities are meant to be spaces of healing, safety, and protection, where people receive healthcare services without fear. When allegations of sexual assault arise involving persons who are at the forefront of providing health care and hold significant power over vulnerable patients, such allegations undermine access to healthcare and erode public confidence in medical institutions.

A consequence of such allegations is the chilling effect on access to healthcare. When patients fear mistreatment, abuse or exploitation, they may delay seeking medical attention or avoid healthcare facilities, thus infringing on their right to access healthcare. Whilst individual allegations must be investigated fairly and in accordance with due process internally and externally, healthcare institutions carry a significant responsibility. Even when allegations have not yet been proven in court, the seriousness of such claims cannot be overstated. Sexual assault, if proven, constitutes a gross violation of integrity and dignity as well as constitutional human rights.

PSA calls on the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health conduct its internal investigation that would also address and prevent such acts while the South African Police Service attend to the criminal act through its investigation to these serious allegations, which bear constitutional, statutory, and administrative obligations when arising at healthcare facilities under their authority. The Department of Health needs to ensure patient safety and take measures to prevent recurrence by collaborating with law enforcement and professional regulatory bodies when misconduct is involved, and by bringing perpetrators to book.

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