
Media Statement

WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DAY – 26 SEPTEMBER

25 September 2019

For immediate release

Pretoria – World Environmental Health Day (WEHD) is celebrated each year on 26 September. This commemoration day was declared by the International Federation of Environmental Health at its September 2011 Council meeting in Bali, Indonesia. WEHD is dedicated to the promotion of Environmental Health services and improvement in awareness of Environmental Health risk factors which communities are exposed to on daily basis. All countries are expected to commemorate Environmental Health Services on this day annually. In South Africa, the national commemoration is spearheaded by the National Department of Health. However, all municipalities in the country, are urged to commemorate this day whereby awareness on Environmental Health services is promoted at their respective areas. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the theme for this year is “Climate change challenges, time for global Environmental Health to act in unison.” WHO also stipulates that climate change affects the social and environmental determinants of health, which include – clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter. Between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250 000 additional deaths per year, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress.

Climate change poses a great risk to the communities and to the management of environmental related risk factors. This is seen in the re-emergence of diseases, and the resistance by vectors to control measures that have previously proven effective. This calls for a renewed approach to environmental health interventions. The Environmental health profession similarly needs to adapt and prioritise climate change mitigation to its environmental health awareness and interventions approach

The Professional Board for Environmental Health Practitioners which falls under the ambit of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) is a regulatory body that promotes comprehensive, quality and equitable environmental health for all.

The Board has identified that poor environmental health is one of the factors responsible for poor public health outcomes which leads to climate change and the spread of communicable diseases. EHPs are employed by all spheres of government including public sector to discharge preventative health services in the country.

The Board is responsible for ensuring that it protects the public and enforces legislation related to environmental health to reduce health and safety hazards. It also regulates Environmental Health Practitioners(EHPs) registered with the HPCSA. Environmental Health Practitioners have a significant role in the prevention, monitoring and control of environmental health related diseases to ensure quality of health for all humans. The Profession is involved in a variety of activities that includes but not limited to inspecting food facilities on food safety, communicable disease control, control of hazardous substances, water quality monitoring, as well as environmental pollution control and monitoring to ensure a safe environment and quality of lives for all humans.

The Professional Board is committed to creating awareness on the challenges related to environmental health issues in South Africa and also supports the activities that will place the environmental issues, including climate change, at the forefront of political discussions.

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About the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA)

The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) also known as Council is a statutory body established under the Health Professions Act 56 of 1974. The HPCSA is committed to protecting the public and guiding the professions. The mission of the HPCSA is quality and equitable healthcare for all.

The HPCSA is mandated to regulate the health professions in the country in aspects pertaining to education, training and registration, professional conduct and ethical behaviour, ensuring Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and fostering compliance with healthcare standards.

In order to safeguard the public and guiding the professions, registration in terms of the Act is a prerequisite for practising any of the health professions registrable with Council.

Issued by:

Daphney Chuma

Head of Division: Corporate Affairs

Health Professions Council of South Africa

Tel: 012 338 9481

Cell: 071 680 8111

Email: daphneyc@hpcsa.co.za