

Hospital functions like a well-oiled machine

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When a hospital is accredited for a sixth time, pundits would say it is a safe assumption that it is functioning like a well-oiled machine: only a few tweaks are necessary to meet rigorous international standards.



A proud team... Mediclinic Worcester receives a sixth accreditation award from Cohsasa CEO, Jacqui Stewart (holding the certificate). She congratulated the diligent team that made the prestigious four-year award possible.

Back row: Gys Mostert, human resource business partner; Gina Pietersen-Olivier, unit manager: Medical; Shamila Daniels, unit manager: ICU; Jeanine Smit, hospital secretary; Johandi Le Roux, unit manager: Obstetrics; Anrietta Smit, patient experience manager; Claudette Taylor, unit manager: Surgical; Johanna Webster, patient safety and infection prevention control manager; Mbunike Els, learning and development facilitator and Johann Fransman, technical manager.

Front row: Jacques van Wyk, hospital general manager; Jacqui Stewart, CEO Cohsasa; Suné Kilian, nursing manager.

Instead of hospital staff quivering at the idea of 'an accreditation audit', the stage in the accreditation journey has been reached where professionals have conversations and discuss compliance or non-compliance with standards as equal peers.

This is the experience of nursing manager Suné Kilian and the multidisciplinary team at Mediclinic Worcester in the Western Cape, a hospital that has been accredited half a dozen times since 1997.

At an external survey from 30 May to 2 June this year, the hospital scored a phenomenal 98 out of a possible 100. After examining all requirements in depth, the board of Cohsasa had no hesitation in conferring a four-year accreditation award on the hospital in August 2022.

This 182-bed, multidisciplinary, specialist private hospital is situated in the Cape Winelands district. It is the only acute, private hospital in Worcester and has a wide catchment area that includes more than 20 surrounding rural towns.

Suné Kilian has been a part of the Cohsasa journey at the hospital since its first accreditation in 1997 and is therefore well acquainted with the requirements of the quality improvement programme and how the different areas of the hospital need to work together to achieve compliance with the standards.

She reached out to unit managers of various hospital service areas to ask of them how they found the accreditation

experience, given the hospital's exemplary accreditation history. They all felt that meeting standards and working according to policies and procedures has become embedded in the DNA of all the hospital's operations.

"Cohsasa standards have become our way of doing things," says Kilian. "It is also Mediclinic's way. We receive guidance from our corporate office. It is a way of living. It is not a tick box exercise. What surveyors see is what we do every day; we are not putting on a show for them. It is not an add on, it is part of what we do as a matter of course to ensure that our patients receive the best possible care."

Like most hospitals in the country, Mediclinic Worcester was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the hospital maintained elevated levels of compliance with the accreditation standards despite major challenges posed by the pandemic.

Says Kilian: "Our nursing units have been staffed by people who have worked together for a long time. Even during the toughest times, we got together in huddles every morning and supported each other. We worked as a team and spoke through our difficulties. Staff were encouraged to take part in debriefings. Although they were very tired and had to learn new procedures quickly, they coped.



Jacques van Wyk, Mediclinic Worcester Hospital general manager, Jacqui Stewart, chief executive officer of Cohsasa and nursing manager Suné Kilian

"We did not have weeks to make decisions, we had hours. The situation changed constantly. But because we had a good framework in place – the requirements of Cohsasa and the Mediclinic policies and procedures – we could work from this to guide us. We noticed this particularly in the areas of infection control and disaster management.

"What we learnt from Covid-19 is that we don't need a long time to make changes – we can do it more quickly! We are indebted to personnel at our corporate office who made intelligent strategic decisions that helped guide us on the frontline. They provided us with various potential scenarios, giving us direction for each one.

"During these extraordinary circumstances, we continued our focus on patient care and did not refuse admission to any patient. We took in all patients presenting at our emergency unit. The first Covid-19 wave that hit us hard, and we were treating up to 70 Covid patients a day. Despite the pressures this placed on the hospital, we got through it all!" says Kilian.

"We regard Cohsasa accreditation as a positive experience. It provides us with a process that we are assured we are working according to international standards. If something is wrong, we do not fall apart – we fix it. And sometimes we have different opinions on matters and then we discuss it with the surveyors. The unit managers say the Cohsasa surveyors make them feel so at ease so that even if they felt slightly nervous at the start of the survey, by the time it is finished they were completely relaxed," says nursing manager, Suné Kilian.

Well done Mediclinic Worcester!

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