

Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital Emergency Centre Upgrade and Expansion

Phase 2 Progress Report: November 2020 - January 2021

Introduction to the Emergency Centre

The Emergency Centre (EC) at Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital (RCWMCH) is the only specialist paediatric centre in sub-Saharan Africa. Operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, the centre provides high quality, evidence-based medical, surgical, nursing and paramedical services to sick and injured little patients. However, the EC is more than just a medical facility with resuscitation machines and clinicians, it is also a space where traumatised families of our little ones are reassured and cared for by loving staff members.



Project Overview

The upgrade and expansion of the current Emergency Centre began in April 2019 and was designed in partnership with the clinical team. The project will be delivered in two phases: with phase 1 completed in October 2020, and phase 2 in January 2022. The upgrade and expansion will improve the personalised care and flow of patients and healthcare professionals through this extremely busy area of the Hospital - all spaces designed with the comfort and safety of young patients in mind. As the frontline of the hospital, dedicated EC staff continue to manage the critical and life-saving care for both patients and their families, while construction is underway.

Changes in the Emergency Centre include the following:

Phase 1:

On 19 October 2020, building contractors, Tanasi Projects, handed over Phase 1 of the project. The EC teams were very excited to move into a bright and beautiful new space.

- Two isolation cubicles and an ablution area (completed in February 2020)
- More comfortable waiting areas for families
- Separate triage rooms
- Family counselling room
- Calming room
- Child protection room

In spite of the pressures and inconvenience of construction in progress, EC staff have been committed to maintaining the high standard of care needed to minimise hospitalisation and ensuring that the children return home to their families.

Phase 2:

January 2022 will see Phase 2 of the project completed, which will include:

- Improved staff and teaching facilities
- Burns treatment room
- Specialised units of care within the Emergency Centre
- Medical and Trauma resuscitation areas closer to each other
- Decontamination and isolation room with separate entrance from the outside
- Lift from Emergency Centre directly to Operating Theatres and ICU
- Fully equipped EC

Phase 2 Building Progress

- The area for the Phase 2 site was handed over to the building contractor on 28 October 2020 and minor demolition commenced.
- As the building work is taking place around a functioning and exceptionally busy EC, it was necessary to inform the EC staff and all the affected clinics and wards in the area of the extremely noisy demolition that needed to take place.
- Clinics were postponed where necessary.
- The noisy demolition of the concrete commenced on 16 November 2020 and was completed by the end of November, earlier than expected.
- The builders were off-site from 18 December 2020 until 11 January 2021.
- As of 18 February 2021:
 - Progress on Phase 2: 23%
 - Estimated time elapsed: 30%
 - Amount certified: 6.6%.



Overall Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Hospital

Hospital Management of the RCWMCH proactively put measures in place to ensure that staff, families and children were protected as far as possible. The hospital assisted with the creation of capacity at metro hospitals' adult services by accepting children with emergency issues, as well as accepting adolescents up to age 18 years. As of 21 December 2020, RCWMCH recorded 244 patients and 212 staff members who had tested positive for COVID; 179 staff members had returned to work. There were 4 recorded deaths of COVID-positive paediatric patients. Patients who passed away had significant underlying comorbidities, with one of the patients having previously been placed on a palliative care plan. There were 3 confirmed COVID-positive staff deaths, and several severe infections requiring intensive care unit admission. [Click here to read the impact report in the South African Medical Journal.](#)

Festive Period Patient Visits

As the only dedicated paediatric EC for the Western Cape, the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital sees life-threatening medical and trauma cases. These include children injured in car and taxi accidents, pedestrian accidents, burns and drownings. Violence related trauma takes the form of beatings, attacks with weapons, sexual abuse and other unimaginable horrors that leave our children with long-term, detrimental effects on their health, social and psychological wellbeing. These are the children that the Red Cross Emergency Centre receives every day. In an ideal world none of these things happen to our children. If we could prevent it, we would. The difference that an optimized Emergency Centre makes for the children of Red Cross Hospital impacts communities, who are often left with very little hope when such devastating trauma occurs. Other injury, poisoning and various consequences of external causes, diseases of the respiratory system, infectious and parasitic diseases were also some of the primary cases that were treated over the festive period.



	Festive Period EC Visits		
	2020		2021
	Nov	Dec	Jan
Medical	1951	2015	1965
Trauma	542	583	479
Total	2493	2598	2444

Messages from staff:

“ The functionality of space has gone beyond our expectations - it is very rewarding.

We have remained resilient and functional during tough times. We are grateful that the rate of staff infections has reduced drastically. The air in the new EC, just to breathe, seems a lot better in the new, spacious and light-filled environment. We now have 6 beds instead of 4 beds for the resuscitation unit. It is an absolute joy to work here. We need our donors to please help us finish the building and equip our EC with new functional equipment.”

Sr Zanele
Operations Manager
Medical Emergency Unit



“ The triage space is much better as it is closer to the Emergency Unit and we don't have to bypass waiting areas anymore. The layout out and flow are excellent. The new clear signage is very helpful for first time visitors.

The waiting area is child-friendly and comfortable for families. I am so excited about the completion of Phase 2. Thank you very much to all donors who have made this possible.”

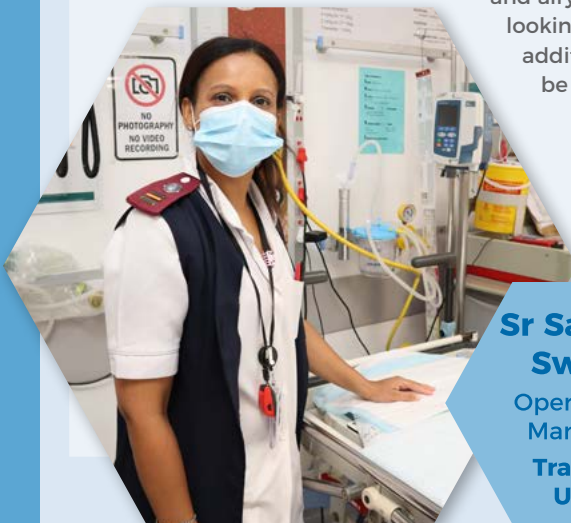
Sr Najwa Benjamin
Triage Unit



“ The new areas work very well and have ample space with new storerooms. Private, child-friendly area for Child Protection procedures is wonderful. We now have 3 rooms instead of just 1. The bigger space allows ample space for 4 Beds and the Lodox X-ray machine is much better positioned.

Staff, patients and parents love the bright and airy environment. I am really looking forward to Phase 2 where additional bed space will be incredible.”

Sr Sandra Swart
Operations Manager
Trauma Unit



Dr Makoreni Mpho
Medical Emergency Doctor



“ Our equipment and consumables are much easier to find in the new spacious EC. Social distancing would have been practically impossible in the previous congested space. I'm expecting a lot more improvement after the Phase 2 opening.

Staff and patients deeply appreciate the brightness and colourful spaces - it's not as frightening and dull as before. It is an absolute privilege to work in this new EC every day. The generosity of donors is remarkable.”

Hope After a Brain Injury and Emotional Trauma

Trauma does not discriminate. Traumatic events are sadly not only restricted to adults – in many instances, children find themselves being direct or indirect victims of trauma. Incidents range from a child suffering an injury due to a fall to a child who experiences a car accident or endures some form of abuse.

Children are the most vulnerable to trauma since most aspects of their bodies, minds, and brains are still developing. Many studies have shown that the impact of trauma at the early stages of development can have long-lasting effects on a child's personality, behaviour and mental health.

Those who have experienced trauma have difficulty expressing and managing emotions and may internalize them, causing potential anxiety, developmental issues or prolonged distress. Six-year old Luseko Sixishe displayed disturbing changes in his behaviour that set off alarm bells after suffering a severe brain injury. What should have been a day of fun and laughter, became a nightmare for Luseko when he was knocked over by a car while innocently playing outside his house.

After the car accident, Luseko's mother, Ntembentsha Sixishe, rushed him to the nearest local clinic for an examination. Luseko was discharged almost immediately, because he had no visible external and physical injuries. However, after a couple of days, his mother started noticing sudden behavioural changes in her son.

“ I noticed that he would keep quiet for long periods. He stopped speaking, struggled to sleep and seemed to be in constant pain – even though he had no visible injuries. His exposure to that traumatic incident impacted him emotionally. ”
Ntembentsha

Trusting her maternal instinct, quick-thinking Ntembentsha took her son back to the local clinic. They transferred him to the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital immediately. Upon arriving at the hospital, Luseko underwent a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) exam (*a painless, non-invasive radiology scan that helps doctors diagnose or treat a disease or injury*). The exam revealed a fractured bone in Luseko's brain, which induced internal bleeding in his brain – they had to start operating on him without delay (*brain bleeds are extremely life-threatening and can result in brain damage*). Doctors managed to locate the fractured bone, removed it and stopped the bleeding. Currently, there is no confirmation of the long-term effects of the surgery, however, his mother's instinctual persistence and the quick response of the doctors most certainly saved Luseko's life.

After a child suffers a traumatic event, their mental and emotional state should be every parent's top priority. Fortunately, Ntembentsha monitored her son and picked up the shift in his emotional state, prompting her to seek further help. Luseko is recovering very well at the hospital and cherishes the love and support he gets from his mom and the caring staff at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital. The trust that he has developed in his mother and in the staff at the hospital will have a positive impact on healing his trauma for years to come.



Conclusion

Chantel Cooper says, "Walking through the corridors of the busy hospital during a pandemic reminds you of the true value of dedication and commitment to saving the lives of children. Every single person has a significant and profoundly relevant role in the hospital community. From the porters who bring a smile to a frightened child when fetching them from their bed for surgery, to the team in the kitchen who have the difficult task of cooking up a tasty storm for children with different dietary requirements, and the cleaning staff responsible for cleanliness and hygiene and laundry that needs to be changed on a daily basis. These and many other selfless individuals touch the lives of our children and their families, and bring hope and comfort in some of their most difficult hours. We are deeply grateful to the doctors, nurses and every single individual in the Red Cross Hospital community who have put their lives on the line during a pandemic to ensure our children can grow up and live their dreams.

"We want all individuals who have contributed to our cause to know: you have made a very real difference through your act of kindness. Your contribution has not only been instrumental in helping the team in the hospital and the sick and injured children under their care, your donations have also made a profound impact on the lives of the families who love their children."

Our heartfelt and sincere appreciation extends to each and every one of our loyal donors for your ongoing and continued financial support.

The total cost of the project is R122 million, with a significant outstanding balance of R8 407 357 required to complete this project.

Thank you for caring. We could not do what we do without you.

www.childrenshospitaltrust.org.za



66% of children are under the age of 5

24% of children are under 1

24 hour medical, surgical, nursing and paramedical services

**56% male
44% female**

Over 29,000 children were treated at the EC from January to December 2020

R122 million target to raise for the new Emergency Centre upgrade and expansion

R8 407 357 required to complete the project.