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Covid-19: 'Why did he not eat for 48 hours?' - father wants answers after son dies in hospital

news24

Sesona Ngqakamba

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Shonisani Lethole.(Shonisani Lethole, Facebook)

Shonisani Lethole, 35, died at Tembisa Hospital after being admitted with breathing difficulties.

He was tested for Covid-19, but died without receiving his results.

His family is appalled by the alleged mistreatment at the hospital and have questioned why the results took so long.

"Why did my son not eat for 48 hours? He called me to ask for food, why?"

These are the words of a heartbroken father whose son died at the Tembisa Hospital in Ekhuruleni on Monday.

Shonisani Lethole, 35, was admitted after experiencing breathing problems two weeks ago.

His father, Albert, who had transported him to the doctor after he rang him complaining about difficulty with his breathing, told News24 they had received poor treatment from the first healthcare facility they went to before he was admitted at Tembisa Hospital.

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Shonisani himself then video called his family on the Saturday, informing them that he had been taken out of the casualty section and placed in a ward.

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When the family then tried reaching him again later on the Saturday, he didn't answer his phone.

Lethole said they then contacted the hospital again and were informed he was on oxygen.

"At 16:00 on Saturday they (hospital staff) call me saying I must come and collect Shonisani's clothes. I was shaking because if they were saying I must collect clothes, it meant something else. When I get there, they say Shonisani is recovering."

'Cause of death is coronavirus'

He was not allowed to see his son and was asked to take Shonisani's clothes because they were apparently dirty.

When the family enquired about Shonisani on Sunday, they were told he was still recovering. On Monday morning, they were informed Shonisani had died.

Lethole said they were informed that the "cause of death is coronavirus".

But the father is questioning why the results were only returned after his son had died.

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"The answers I need from the department is why my son did not eat and why was I only showed the results after he died - and why did the nurse tell me about the cause of death without any paper in the hand to show them.

"Why did my son not eat for 48 hours? He called me to ask for food, why?"

Lethole also claims his son was not assisted when he needed to go to the toilet.

Health department getting all the facts

Gauteng health department spokesperson Kwara Kekana said it had been made aware of the allegations against the hospital.

She said after the matter was brought to the attention of MEC Bandile Masuku's office, it was referred to the hospital's chief executive.

"The department will ascertain all facts surrounding the incident with the quality assurance team, and a detailed report will be provided to the family," Kekana said.

The family is planning to bury Shonisani in Limpopo next Friday.

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Shonisani fell ill.

Describing his son, Lethole said he was a quiet and loving person who had never given him any problems. He said even his neighbours were saddened by his passing.

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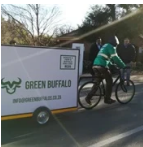
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The father is also questioning why it took long for his son's Covid-19 test results to be returned - resulting in him dying without knowing whether he was positive or not.

Lethole said two days before Shonisani was admitted to Tembisa Hospital on Tuesday, they had to queue in the cold for hours and were sent from pillar to post between several health facilities, including Kempton Park Clinic and Edenvale Hospital.

Eventually when they were assisted at Kempton Park Clinic, they were then transferred to Tembisa Hospital where Shonisani was admitted.

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But before being admitted, Lethole claims a doctor at the hospital had asked him to rather take his son home to quarantine, saying, "Take this young man back to go and quarantine at home".

"And so I started to fight. But now he (Shonisani) started to complain that he can't breathe [properly], then one lady doctor said the young man doesn't look fine. They [then] admit Shonisani," said Lethole.

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But what followed after the admission was a nightmare for the family when his son called him late on Tuesday, requesting food be brought to him because he had not been given any at the hospital.

Because it was already late at night, his father said he would not be able to do so.

On Thursday, 25 June, Shonisani also tweeted Minister of Health Zweli Mkhize, informing him of the treatment at the hospital and the fact that he had not eaten for 48 hours.



shonisani lethole
@Shonilethole



@DrZweliMkhize mkhize can I respond to your tweets if the problems I have at one of your facilities continues its becoming unbearable and the don't seem to care. Didn't eat for 48 hours.

11:31 AM · Jun 25, 2020



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