Earlier Access and Evolving Referral Patterns in a Hospital-Based Paediatric Palliative Care Service

Ané Büchner

Thursday 22 October 2026

Maruzza Conference, Roma

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Make today matter

Hamba Nawe
PROJECT

7TH MARUZZA INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
ON PAEDIATRIC PALLIATIVE CARE

Background

Palliative care services for children limited and fragmented in South Africa – some excellent hospices and some excellent out of hospital NPOs



17 markers explained per province:

- **WC:** 1 NGO, 1 paed hospice, 3 adult hospices
- **EC:** 1 paed hospice, 1 adult hospice
- **KZN:** 1 NGO, 2 paed hospice, 1 adult hospice
- **Gauteng:** 3 children's hospices
- **Free State**: 1 children's hospice
- **NC, Mpu, Limpopo, NW:** NO SERVICES

Maruzza 2024… we are brainstorming!

Hamba Nawe
PROJECT









January 2025: Official start of Hamba Nawe Project palliative care service

- Palliative care = Essential part of comprehensive care for children with life threatening and life-limiting illness
- Not just end of life!
- Great need in a tertiary hospital - a lot of patients with complex and serious illnesses
- Previously - some integration in oncology (two trained nurses, structured meetings)
- Hamba Nawe = **"we walk with you"**
- Hospital-based paediatric palliative care service
- "Extra level of support", "practical help", "extra time to explain"
- Compassion, dignity, family-centered care, hope
- **There is always something we can do**



The start of a new era for our hospital!

Hamba Nawe

PAEDIATRIC PALLIATIVE CARE

Walking together

Our Journey

From a spark to a growing light for children and families across our hospital

MORE CHILDREN
MORE FAMILIES
A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

OCT 2024

Maruzza Conference

A spark becomes a fire!

Inspiration, vision and encouragement to bring paediatric palliative care to our hospital.

JAN 2025

Official start!

- Coordinator appointed
- First referrals via online form
- Presentations at paediatrics, ENT, neurosurgery and surgery

FEB 2025

First outpatient visit

Counselling room becomes a place of hope, listening and support.

MAR 2025

Partnership with Hospivision

Meeting and discussion of collaboration.

MAR 2025

Oncology palliative care MDT's kick off

Regular multidisciplinary discussions to support children and families.

APR 2025

A play therapist joins our team

Volunteer support to bring play, creativity and joy to our children.

MAY 2025

Training programme begins

Every second Thursday at 7am for nurses and spiritual support workers.

MAY 2025

First official outpatient clinic

6 patients

A new step in ongoing support for children and families.

JUN 2025

Growing referrals

98 referrals in first 6 months.

AUG 2025

First Memory Day

25 families

A special day to remember, connect and support one another.

Children
Families
Teams
Communities

OCT 2025

First Hope in Motion walk

Initiated by one of our bereaved moms. A beautiful day of remembrance, community and hope.

NOV 2025

Continued education

- Skills development
- Increased awareness across hospital teams
- Sharing our journey with students and colleagues

DEC 2025

Christmas party

70 families

A joyful celebration for our children and families.

DEC 2025

Bereavement day

A space for healing, connection and continued support.

MAR 2026

Second Memory Day

15 families

Remembering our precious children.

APR 2026

ECN Presentation

- Tiny Lives, Big Lessons

JUN 2026

Hope in Motion walk

World Kidney Day
12 March 2026

JUL 2026

Hope in Motion walk

Mandela Day
18 July 2026

JUL 2026

SEPT 2026

Hamba Nawe Paediatric Palliative Care Conference

"Start where you are"

- 2 days
- 180–200 participants
- Practical knowledge, connections and a network
- A growing community of palliative care champions

OCT 2026

Family Day at the Zoo

50 families
(~200 guests)

A day of fun, relaxation and making special memories together.

AND THROUGHOUT ...

- Inpatient consults (6-bed cubicle)
- Growing outpatient service
- Family support and counselling
- Memory and bereavement support
- Education and training
- Collaborations and partnerships
- Research and quality improvement

JAN – MAY 2026

Broadening reach

- Referrals from a wide range of paediatric specialties
- Inpatient and outpatient support
- Family counselling and bereavement care
- Increasing recognition of PPC across the hospital.

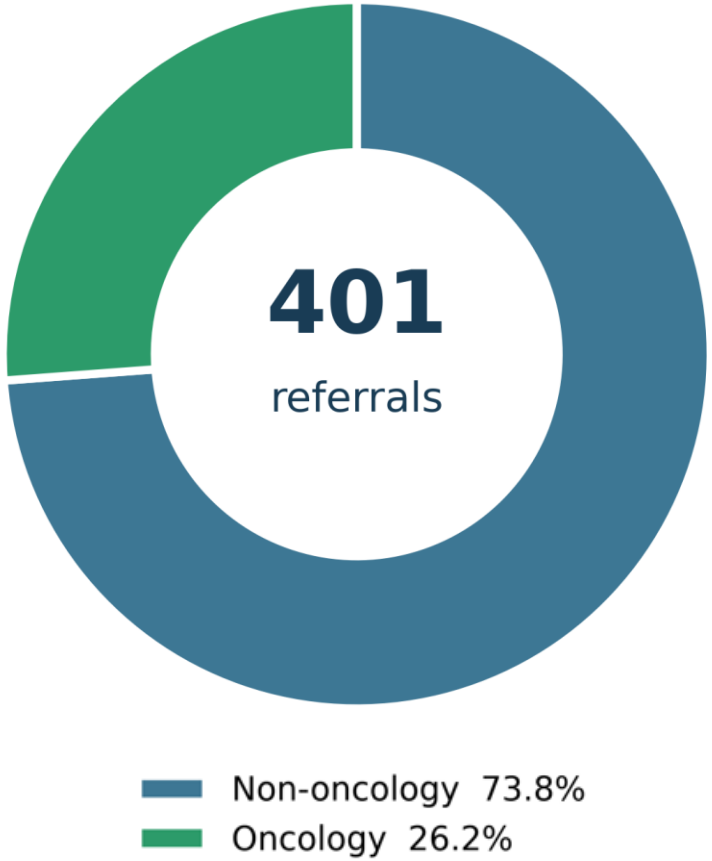
BEYOND 2026

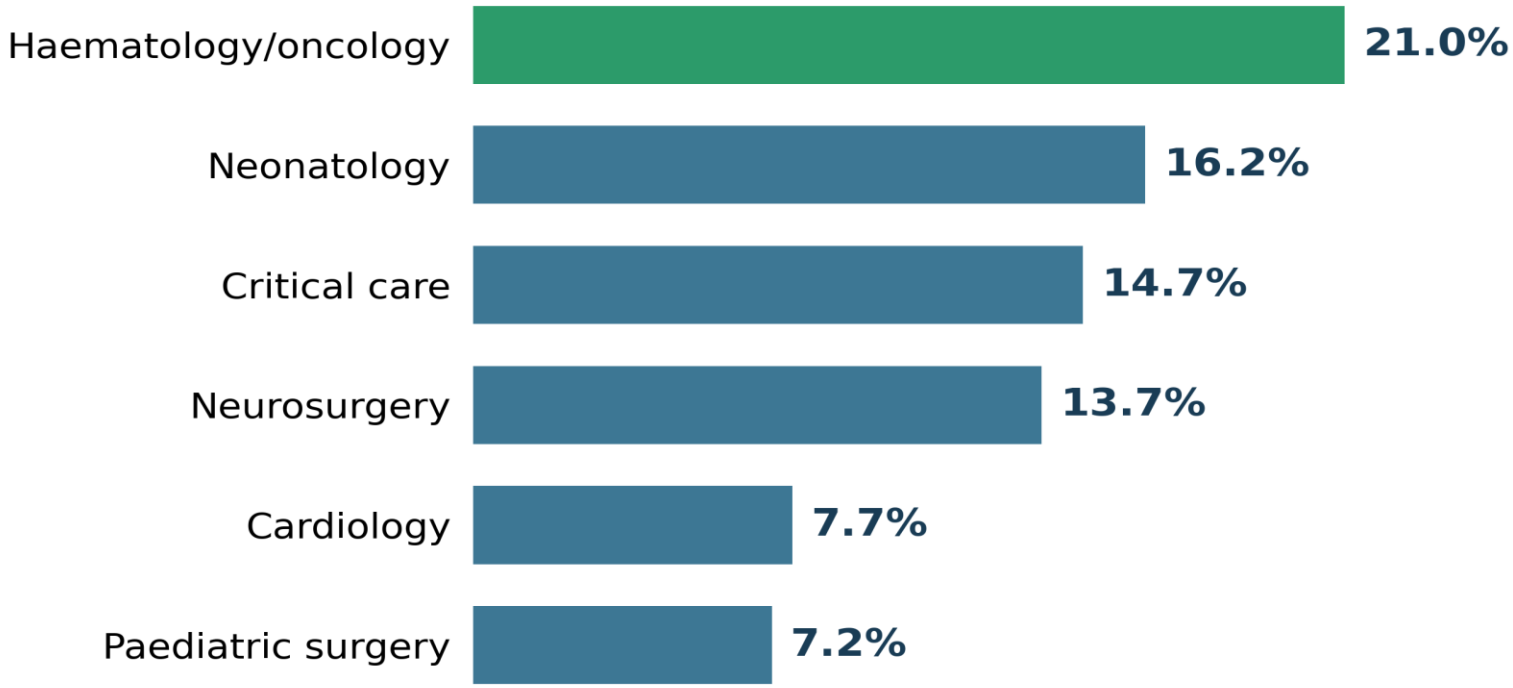
Our hopes

- Reach more children and families
- Strengthen integration across all paediatric services
- Expand training and support
- Build a sustainable future for Hamba Nawe.

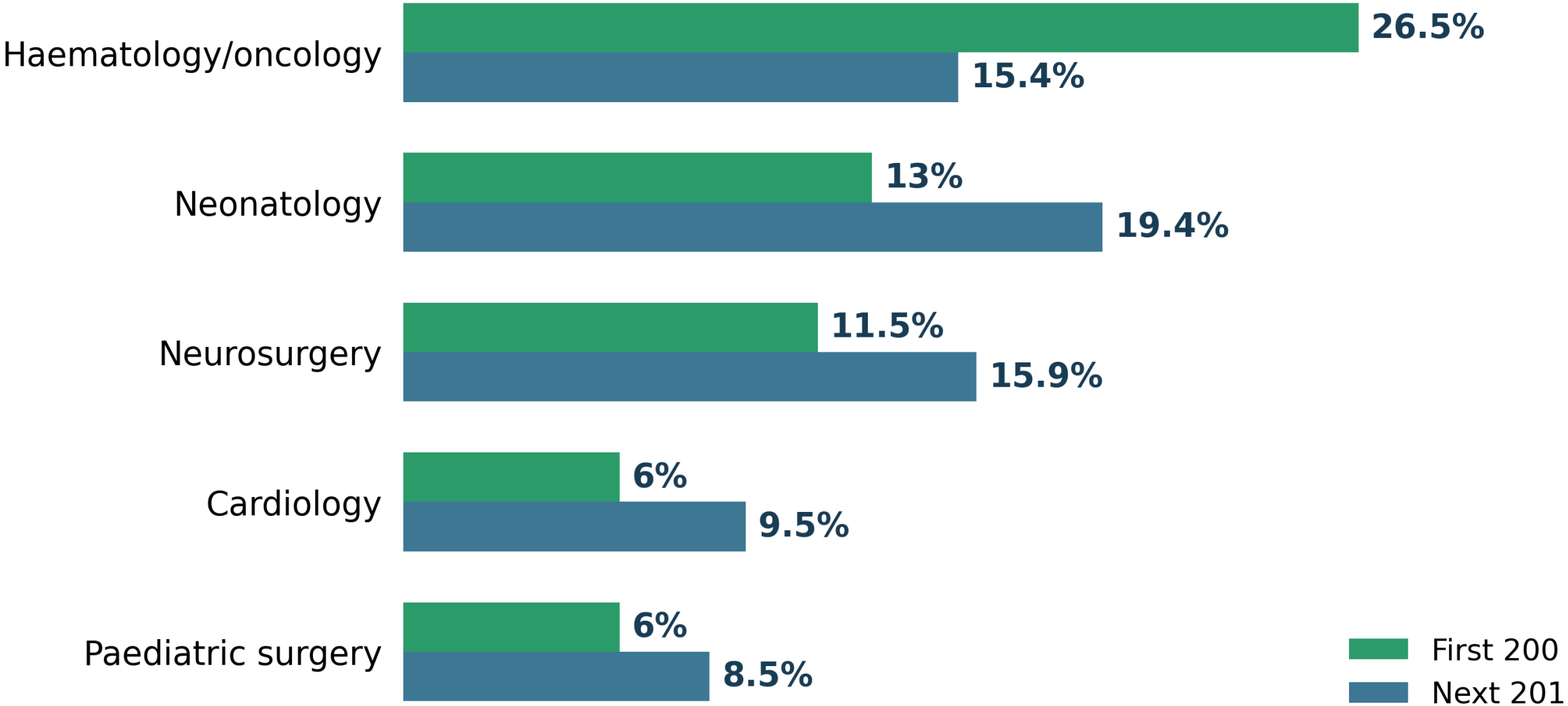
More Children More Families A Brighter Tomorrow

Our first 17 months: n= 401
Who were the children?





How referral patterns evolved



What helped the service grow?

- Awareness (infiltration from the inside)
- Joining MDT rounds as the palliative team (neurosurgery!)
- Being very present in the NICU and PICU
- Memory-making campaign in neonatal unit
- Befriending the nurses, resolving conflicts, being present, sharing resources, spreading love and cheer
- Family support
- Continuous awareness
- Building (lots and lots) of partnerships



Partnerships…



Looking forward...

01 **Awareness & earlier referral**

Strengthen relationships and integrate PPC earlier.

02 **Family-centred care**

Expand practical, psychosocial and meaningful family support.

03 **Research & learning**

Generate evidence, measure impact and improve care.

04 **Community capacity building**

Connect clinics and hospitals along shared family care pathways.

05 **Bereavement & parent voices**

Support bereaved families and involve parents in shaping services.

06 **Education & sustainability**

Mentor PPC champions and build lasting local capacity.

"Start where you are. But don't stop there."



Take-home message: Start where you are!

Hamba Nawe