

Health



The Department of Health (DoH) has an overall responsibility for healthcare in the country, with a specific responsibility for public-sector healthcare. The department's priority is to improve the health status of the entire population and to realise its vision of a long and healthy life for all South Africans. To accomplish this, it has identified four strategic outputs:

- increasing life expectancy
- decreasing maternal and child mortality
- combating HIV and AIDS and decreasing the burden of tuberculosis (TB)
- strengthening health-system effectiveness.

These focal areas are consistent with the health-related millennium development goals (MDGs), which the United Nations (UN) expects nations of the world to attain by 2015.

Statistics South Africa's 2014 mid-year population estimates, released in July 2014, show some gains for South Africans over the last year. Increased life expectancy of the population demonstrates that the number of AIDS-related deaths and infant mortality rates have dropped over the past few years.

The statistics demonstrate that in addition to other interventions that are contributing to a higher life expectancy, South Africa is making headway with delivering antiretroviral medications to citizens living with HIV and AIDS.

Child health

More women are getting into government's Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) Programme.

In April 2014, the DoH launched a programme to register pregnant women who use a cellphone to send a 'please call me' which allows the DoH to capture their details. Through this system the department keeps track of their progress.

According to the Human Sciences Research Council's National HIV Prevalence, Incidence and Behaviour Survey released in April 2014, maternal and child morbidity declined due to the PMTCT.

Managing communicable and non-communicable diseases (NCDs)

The main NCDs in the country include diabetes, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, mental disorders and cardiovascular diseases.

Africa remains the only WHO region where communicable diseases still account for more deaths than NCDs, according

to a 2010 global status report.

The main risk factors associated with NCDs are tobacco use, alcohol abuse, an unhealthy diet and physical inactivity.

Hepatitis B is widespread in sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa. Past studies have found that about 8% of children under the age of one and almost 16% of children under the age of six are infected with Hepatitis B.

Between 10% and 18% of South African adults are Hepatitis B virus carriers. Infection has been more common in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

Since 1995, all children have been vaccinated against hepatitis B. Blood safety in South Africa has effectively reduced hepatitis B and hepatitis C transmission.

HIV, AIDS and TB



South Africa has rolled out the world's largest treatment programme, with over 2,7 million people initiated on ARVs.

The 2016 International AIDS Conference will be held in Durban and South Africa will be hosting it for the second time in the same town since 2000.

The conference is being organised by the International AIDS Society, with its partners from the United Nations, the South African Government and international civil society organisations.

Research into the prevention of HIV is at the centre of government's strategy aimed at ending the pandemic that has held the world hostage for many years.

In October 2014, the HIV Research for Prevention 2014

(HIVR4P) conference brought over 1 000 delegates made up of researchers, academics and scholars to South Africa.

HIVR4P 2014 is the world's first and only scientific meeting dedicated exclusively to biomedical HIV prevention research.

In November 2014, the Prevent, Avoid, Stop, Overcome and Protect (PASOP) Campaign was launched in an effort to call on all communities to join hands with government in the fight against HIV and AIDS and TB.

It is expected that the 50% decrease target will be reached through the use of multifaceted prevention approaches.

These included testing and screening people for HIV and TB, medical male circumcision, initiating people living with HIV who are eligible for ARV treatment and reducing the stigma and discrimination related to HIV and TB.

The PASOP strategy prioritises key populations and vulnerable groups such as sex workers, the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersex community, women and youth.

The highest rates of new HIV infections are still found among young single women who have older boyfriends and/or multiple sex partners.

The department was set to intensify the PASOP campaign by reaching men who are partners to young women, especially the "3Ms" or Mobile Men with Money and men that have sex with men, but do not identify as gay or bisexual.

In March 2015, on World TB Day, the DoH launched a programme to test 150 000 inmates in 242 correctional services facilities for TB and also screen the families of those who have tested positive.

Furthermore, the department conducted TB screening on about 500 000 mineworkers in six mining districts. The screening included the family members of those who tested positive for TB and children who attend schools or crèches in the mining towns.

The incidence of TB in the mines in South Africa is the highest of any working community anywhere in the world.

Improving health infrastructure

In September 2014, the official opening of the Dr Harry Surtie Hospital in the Northern Cape and the Natalspruit Hospital in Gauteng were an important milestone in the country's infrastructure plans.

The hospitals were among many important milestones in government's national infrastructure programme.

The programme will see 43 hospitals and 213 clinics built

over the next five years to meet the needs of the National Health Insurance system.

In 2014, nine Gauteng hospitals and three pathology facilities received new x-ray machines that can scan trauma patients within 12 seconds - an improvement to the existing machines, as its characteristics make it unique. The nine units cost R60 million.

The hospitals that received these machines were Natal-spruit, George Mukhari, Steve Biko, Tembisa, Helen Joseph, Tambo Memorial, Sebokeng, Kalafong and Leratong.

In February 2014, construction started on a new day-clinic in Century City in Cape Town. The clinic comprises, among other things, four operating theatres, 24 day-beds, a radiology unit and pharmacy. The facility was operational by October 2014.

In June 2014, construction work started on the new Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital in Parktown, Johannesburg. The new facility will be a highly advanced specialised children's hospital staffed by 150 doctors and 451 paediatric nurses.

In addition to giving patients access to excellent health-care, the hospital will serve as a training and research facility, which will ensure a much wider reach into the region. Its close proximity to Wits University's Medical School and the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital will allow for professional cross-feeding enhancing both training and operational efficiency. The hospital was expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2016.

National Health Insurance

South Africa is in the process of introducing an innovative system of healthcare financing with far-reaching consequences on the health of South Africans.

The NHI will ensure that everyone has access to appropriate, efficient and quality health services. It will be phased-in over a period of 14 years. This will entail major changes in the service delivery structures, administrative and management systems.

The NHI is intended to bring about reform that will improve service provision. It will promote equity and efficiency so as to ensure that all South Africans have access to affordable, quality healthcare services regardless of their socio-economic status.

Re-engineering primary healthcare

In November 2014, President Jacob Zuma launched Operation Phakisa 2: Scaling up Ideal Clinic Realisation and Maintenance Programme. It is designed to fast-track the implementation of government priority programmes.

Through Operation Phakisa 2, the public health sector seeks to improve the quality of care provided in 3 500 PHC facilities, which consists of government clinics and Community Health Centres (CHCs).

This work entails transforming the existing clinics and CHCs into ideal clinics, which all South Africans would use, out of choice, due to the enhanced quality of services they will provide.



National Health Laboratory Service

The NHLS trains pathologists, medical scientists, occupational health practitioners, technologists and technicians in pathology disciplines, including: anatomical pathology, haematology, microbiology, infectious diseases, immunology, human genetics, chemical pathology, epidemiology, occupational and environmental health, occupational medicine, tropical diseases, molecular biology, medical entomology and human nutrition.

Medical schemes

By September 2015, there were about 87 medical schemes in South Africa, with around 8 776 279 beneficiaries.