



Health

One of the challenges that has confronted government since the advent of democracy was the process of reforming the health system. This included the creation of a single, unified national health system and strengthening institutional capacity at national, provincial and district levels.

In 1994, government started to provide free public primary healthcare (PHC) services for children under six years, and pregnant and lactating women. During the same period, government initiated a clinic-building and upgrading programme, which resulted in the building and upgrading of more than 1 300 clinics between 1994 and February 2005.

PHC services include immunisation, communicable and endemic disease prevention, maternity care, screening of children, integrated management of childhood illnesses and child healthcare, health promotion, counselling, management of chronic diseases, and diseases of older persons, rehabilitation, accident and emergency services, family planning, and oral health.

Where necessary, patients with complications are referred to higher levels of care, such as hospitals.

Health budget

The total health budget for 2005/06 was R9,825 billion. This was an increase of 11,4% compared with the previous financial year. This allocation is projected to rise to R10,658 billion in 2006/07 and to R11,184 billion in 2007/08.

Source: *Estimates of National Expenditure, 2004*

Health-delivery system

The major emphasis in the development of health services at provincial level has been the shift from curative hospital-based healthcare to that provided in an integrated community-based manner.

Provincial-hospital patients pay for examinations and treatment in accordance with their income and number of dependants. A provincial government may partly or entirely finance patients' treatment.

Clinics

A network of mobile clinics run by government forms the backbone of primary and preventive healthcare.

Hospitals

According to the Health Systems Trust (HST), there were 382 provincial public hospitals in 2004.

The Hospital Revitalisation Grant increased by 12,7% from R911 million in 2004/05 to R1,027 billion in 2005/06. Government completed the revitalisation of four hospitals in 2004, with another 37 nearing completion.

There were 357 private hospitals in 2004 according to the HST. Private hospital fees are generally higher than those of provincial hospitals.

South Africa has 18 state mental-health institutions with 10 000 beds.

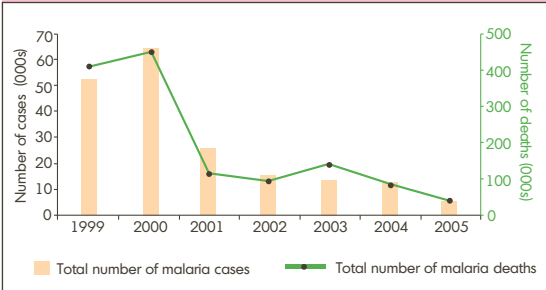
Emergency medical services

Emergency medical services, including ambulance services, are run by the provinces, but training is nationally standardised.

fact

During 2005, 287 dental practitioners registered for continuing professional development. A total of 488 pharmacists commenced community service in 2005, compared with 49 in 2000.

Annual malaria cases and deaths, 1999 – July 2005



Source: Department of Health

Private ambulance services also provide services to the community. Some of these also render aeromedical services.

Legislation

The National Health Act, 2003 is critical legislation that provides a framework for a single health system for South Africa. It highlights the rights and responsibilities of health-providers and users, and ensures broader community participation in healthcare delivery from a health facility up to national level.

Among other things, the National Health Act, 2003 will enable government to establish the Office of Standard Compliance.

President Thabo Mbeki promulgated the Traditional Health Practitioners Act, 2004 early in 2005. It provides, among other things, for the establishment of a council for traditional health practitioners.

The Nursing Bill addresses developments in nursing education and classification of nurses into different categories. This Bill will also assist in introducing the nursing profession into the community-service programme, which already covers all other categories of health professionals.

The Mental Healthcare Act, 2002, enforces the culture of human rights within the mental-health services and ensures that mental-health patients are treated with respect and dignity.

National School Health Policy

A policy and set of guidelines, launched in July 2003, aim to ensure that all children have equal access to school-health services. A comprehensive programme to train nurses is being rolled out. The training programme is expected to be implemented across the country by 2007.

Health team

The core team consists of:

- 32 368 registered doctors (May 2005)
- 4 500 dentists (end of 2001)

Allied health professionals:

In May 2005, the following practitioners were registered:

• Ayurveda	122
• Chinese medicine and acupuncture	656
• chiropractors	506
• homoeopaths	726
• naturopaths	158
• osteopaths	62
• phytotherapists	28
• therapeutic aromatherapists	1 123
• therapeutic massage therapists	346
• therapeutic reflexologists	1 935

Supplementary health professionals include the following*:

Basic ambulance assistants	24 784
Psychologists	5 875
Radiographers	5 196
Medical technologists	4 833
Ambulance emergency assistants	4 857
Occupational therapists	2 759
Environmental health officers	2 662
Optometrists	2 458
Physiotherapists	4 739

* May 2005

Nurses

	Registered nurses	Enrolled nurses	Nursing auxiliaries	Students in training
Eastern Cape	12 025	3 073	5 155	2 908
Free State	7 199	1 302	3 070	966
Gauteng	26 864	8 391	14 749	9 045
KwaZulu-Natal	18 995	10 929	9 039	8 524
Limpopo	7 284	2 913	4 170	1 947
Mpumalanga	4 674	1 768	1 803	568
North West	6 382	2 097	3 884	1 189
Northern Cape	1 919	531	928	210
Western Cape	13 148	4 262	7 905	1 800
Total	98 490	35 266	50 703	27 157

Source: South African Nursing Council

- 11 145 pharmacists (May 2005)
- 184 459 nurses and nursing auxiliaries (end of 2004).

South Africa has a severe shortage of health professionals such as physiotherapists, dietitians and radiographers.

National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS)

The NHLS consists of 234 laboratories. It provides cost-effective and efficient laboratory services to all public and private healthcare providers.

Medical schemes

The Council of Medical Schemes regulates the more than 170 registered private medical schemes.

In South Africa, about 25 000 people die from smoking diseases every year.

However, government's policies are beginning to have an impact on reducing the levels of smoking in the country. Research indicates that smoking prevalence among the adult population decreased from 36% in 1996 to 22% in 2003. Among the youth, smoking decreased from 23% in 1999 to 18,5% in 2002.



Community health

The most common communicable diseases in South Africa are tuberculosis (TB), malaria, measles and sexually transmitted infections.

In South Africa, it is recommended that children under the age of five be immunised against the most common childhood diseases. Immunisation should be administered at birth, six weeks, 10 weeks, 14 weeks, nine months, 18 months and five years of age. Childhood immunisations are given to prevent polio, TB, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, haemophilus influenzae type B, hepatitis B and measles.

The set routine immunisation coverage target for fully immunised children under one year is 90%. In 2005, the overall routine immunisation coverage for South Africa stood at 82%, but some districts were still lagging behind with less than 60% immunisation coverage.

The last confirmed case of polio was reported in 1989.

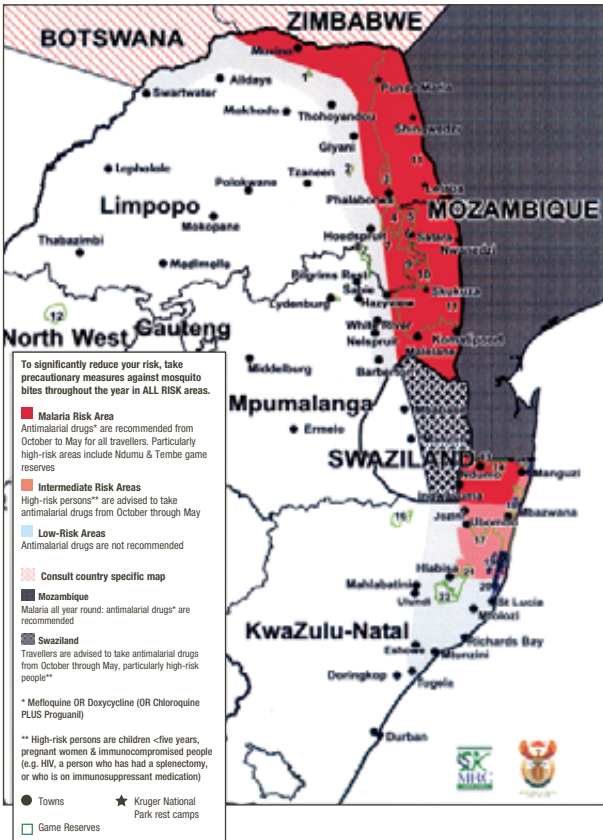
Malaria is endemic in the low-altitude areas of Limpopo, Mpumalanga and north-eastern KwaZulu-Natal. The highest-risk area is a strip of about 100 km along the Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Swaziland borders.

The success of the country's malaria-control programme has not been limited to the affected areas in South Africa but extended to other countries in the Southern African Development Community region where South Africa initiated joint efforts in malaria control with its neighbours. Between July/August 2004 and July/August 2005, there was a 72% reduction in malaria cases and a 50% reduction in malaria-related deaths in South Africa.

Immunisation coverage	
1998	63%
2005	82%

Source: South Africa Yearbook 2005/06

Malaria risk areas



Child and maternal health

In 1998, the infant mortality rate was measured to be 45,4 per 1 000 live births. This decreased in 2003 to 42,5 per 1 000 live births.

The proportion of births attended to by either a nurse or doctor increased from 84% in 1998 to 92% in 2003. This

could be attributed to the increased access to health services both in terms of availability of health facilities in various communities and free health services for pregnant and lactating women, as well as for children under the age of six years.

Tuberculosis

South Africa has 188 000 new TB cases a year. Free testing is available at public clinics countrywide.

Countrywide efforts have now been brought to bear on this disease. These efforts include:

- implementation of the Directly Observed Treatment Strategy
- the establishment of a national TB team
- a countrywide reporting system.

HIV and AIDS

The Government's Comprehensive Plan for Management, Care and Treatment of HIV and AIDS centres around preventing the spread of HIV-infection and improving the health system to enable it to provide a series of interventions aimed at improving the lives of those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

By October 2005, there were 192 sites spread across all the 53 health districts. By the end of August 2005, 78 078 patients were receiving antiretroviral treatment.

Because of its commitment to curb the spread of HIV-infection and reduce the impact of AIDS, government

In 2004/05, the Department of Health focused on, among other things, eliminating the backlog in the provision of assistive devices which are critical in enabling people with disabilities to actively participate in everyday life. In that period, the department supplied 10 407 wheelchairs and buggies, 1 131 pressure care cushions and 4 547 hearing aids. These are in addition to the devices procured and distributed by provinces.



increased the conditional grant by 45% from R782 million in 2004/05 to R1,135 billion in 2005/06.

Condoms are available free of charge at all clinics. The distribution of male condoms increased from 302 million in 2003 to 346 million in 2004. A total of 1,2 million female condoms were distributed through 203 sites nationwide in 2004.

The South African AIDS Vaccine Initiative is a public-private partnership funded at a level of about R50 million per year. It is a holistic vaccine-development initiative that has three South African developed products that are going through the regulatory process preceding Phase 1 trials.