

Africa's first public health state-of-the-art diabetes centre opens

Groote Schuur Hospital (GSH) officially launched its state-of-the-art diabetes centre - the first public healthcare centre of its kind in Africa.



Source: supplied.

The number of People Living with Diabetes (PLWD) continues to escalate globally, outpacing all predictions.

According to the International Diabetes Federation (IDF):

- Over the next two decades, the number of PLWD in Africa is projected to increase by 143%, the greatest increase among all continents.
- In South Africa, we continue to see a rise in the numbers of PLWD, with current estimates suggesting there are 4.6 million South Africans with diabetes.
- Roughly 52% of PLWD are undiagnosed. At least 50% of those that are diagnosed don't have access to adequate care.
- Approximately 70% of all people living with diabetes remain poorly controlled.

"Overall, diabetes was the second most common cause of mortality in South Africa, just behind tuberculosis," says Prof Joel Dave, head of the Department of Endocrinology at GSH.

“The vulnerability of PLWD to infectious diseases has been highlighted during the recent Covid-19 pandemic with diabetes being a significant risk factor for hospitalisation and death from Covid-19. Data from the Western Cape shows that 43% of all those with Covid-19 requiring admission to hospital were PLWD and 23% of all deaths from Covid-19 were PLWD,” he adds.

This centre will be used as a fulcrum on which an extensive and expanded diabetes service will be built providing the following services:

- **Diabetes clinics:** Specifically focusing on complicated diabetes such as Type 1 diabetes, diabetes in pregnancy, diabetes in special situations (patients with organs transplants, cystic fibrosis, steroid-induced, atypical), preoperative optimisation of diabetes, specialised Diabetes Foot Clinic encompassing a multi-disciplinary team including a podiatrist, endocrinologist, vascular surgeon, plastic surgeon.
- **Patient education:** A dedicated patient education centre will form part of the Centre where patients will be encouraged to attend group sessions and one-on-one education sessions with trained diabetes educators.
- **Nurse education:** A state-of-the-art conference room will form part of the Centre and will be used to conduct basic and advanced diabetes education courses for all nurses within the public and private sectors.
- **Doctor education:** The conference room will also be used to conduct masterclasses in diabetes for doctors within the public and private sectors.
- **Training of endocrinologists/physicians:** The expertise and technology in the Centre will be used to train the next generation of endocrinologists and physicians for South Africa and Africa.
- **Teaching of medical students:** The Centre will provide an environment in which the next generation of medical students and general practitioners will be empowered to develop a foundation of knowledge for the optimal management of PLWD.
- **Research:** The Centre will focus on generating local data that will allow for the optimal management of PLWD in South Africa and will be used to inform local and national guidelines.
- **Outreach:** The Centre will house the expertise and technology to conduct outreach clinics and training regionally, nationally and internationally within Africa.

The Provincial Minister of Health, Dr NomaFrench Mbombo, says, “Having worked as a nurse in the public healthcare system, I have seen firsthand how PLWD struggle with their illness.

“It also places enormous pressure on our healthcare system, however, we must do more in providing affordable and uninterrupted access to diabetes care for everyone.

We know that early diagnosis and access to appropriate care for all types of diabetes can avoid or delay complications in people living with the condition,” say Mbombo.

Attending the launch, the Premier of the Western Cape, Alan Winde, as a type 2 diabetic himself, recognised the importance of the centre.