

SA Diabetes Alliance calls for urgent national diabetes education programme

Some 4.2 million South Africans live with diabetes and 45.4% of these individuals are undiagnosed. These are the latest figures from the International Diabetes Federation. In 2018, Statistics SA revealed that diabetes is the number one killer of women in South Africa and the second cause of death in both men and women.



Source: Supplied. Patrick Ngassa Piotie, chairperson of the South African Diabetes Alliance.

Ahead of World Diabetes Day on Monday, 14 November 2022, Patrick Ngassa Piotie, chairperson of the South African Diabetes Alliance, says: "The prevalence of diabetes in South Africa is now a public health crisis. We urgently need a cohesive national diabetes education programme in South Africa targeting people living with diabetes, their families and healthcare workers.

"Complications of uncontrolled diabetes include kidney failure, amputation, blindness and stroke, to name but a few. Diabetes that is not managed properly - by people living with diabetes and/or healthcare workers - is placing enormous strain on the health system. It is devastating individuals, families and livelihoods.

"For example, lower limb amputations due to diabetes cost the fiscus an estimated R68bn annually," he says.

As part of its World Diabetes Day programme, the diabetes alliance has sent an open letter to the Minister of Health, Joe Phaahla, calling on him to urgently implement a national diabetes education programme to prioritise diabetes education in

South Africa and improve access to the best possible diabetes education for health professionals and South Africans.

The South African Diabetes Alliance is supporting the International Diabetes Federation's global priority for this year's World Diabetes Day, namely, "Education to protect tomorrow", which seeks to expand diabetes education to improve outcomes for people living with diabetes.



Study shows type 2 diabetes reduces life expectancy

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"With better education and enhanced knowledge about how to manage diabetes, health outcomes for people living with diabetes can improve. In this way, the pressure the disease is currently placing on individuals and the health system can be reduced," adds Piotie.

South Africa has committed to achieving the World Health Organisation's diabetes coverage targets and improving early detection and treatment of hypertension and diabetes, as outlined in the *National Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, 2022–2027*.

"We welcome these targets. However, achieving them will be extremely difficult in the absence of quality diabetes education," concludes Piotie.

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