

Health revolution in the hands of youth

South African youth must take up the torch in health matters and lead awareness campaigns when it comes to the prevention of tuberculosis (TB) and Aids-related deaths.



Deputy President, David Mabuza

“We live in hope that our youth in all corners of our land will rise again to advance the health and well-being of our nation, as we deepen the programme of reconstruction and development.

“We look to them to work with us to ensure that no one is left behind as we proactively go out to find people infected with TB and put them on treatment,” Deputy President David Mabuza told the 5th South African TB Conference at Durban’s International Convention Centre.

The deputy president stressed that South Africa must not leave TB patients untreated if it is to achieve the goal of ending TB by 2030, in line with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.

Finding the missing patients

The Department of Health estimates that annually, South Africa is missing about 160,000 patients with TB, which is the country’s portion of the more than four-million people globally with TB that are not on treatment.

Undiagnosed TB infected people constitute a significant mobile and invisible infectious pool of people that unknowingly spread the disease to others, including children. Mabuza said government is looking at innovative means to finding these missing patients.

“If we do not invest in research and development now and fail to develop new diagnostics, vaccines and medicines, as well as creative ways of dealing with the social determinants of TB transmission, we will not reach our targets,” he said. The country must explore the best ways of mobilising human and financial resources to improve health outcomes in informal settlements, rural villages and in communities (such as mines and prisons) where people are most vulnerable to acquiring TB.

Despite the missing patients, South Africa is making reasonable progress with successfully treating drug-sensitive TB, which exceeded 85% in 2016 nationally, a level that is among the best in the world.

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