

Cancer Alliance speaks with one voice

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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A 2012 study by *The Lancet* predicted that South Africa could see a shocking 78% increase in the number of cancer cases by 2030.



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Linda Greeff, chairperson of the [Cancer Alliance](#), says that it is time for all people and organisations involved to become more vocal about the disease, and to help overcome the stigma so often associated with cancer.

Call to action

“This disease is not given the top priority attention at the highest levels of government that it deserves. That is why we are saying ‘let’s talk about cancer’ and let’s develop a comprehensive national cancer control plan for our country,” she adds.

The organisation has launched an overview of the state of cancer occurrence, care and treatment in South Africa. And the document serves as an urgent call to action to cancer survivors, family members, health professionals, advocates, activists and policy makers to speak with one voice to effect change.

The Cancer Alliance’s 21 member organisations form a collective of cancer control, non-profit cancer organisations and cancer advocates who are working to provide a platform for civil society to speak with one voice and drive change for all South Africans affected by the disease.

Cancer registry

The Alliance is also calling for the establishment of a fully-functional cancer registry.

“The Cancer Registration Regulation was promulgated in 2011, but implementation is not happening” Greeff explains. “The current register is a pathology-based one which, for the past 15 years, has recorded about 60,000 new cases annually. This is clearly a serious under-representation of the true extent of the challenge.”

"But policy and laws are no good if we drop the ball when it comes to implementation. We need a structured, workable National Cancer Control Plan as a matter of urgency, along with reliable, comparable cancer surveillance data for planning of appropriate cancer services."

Nine priorities

The Cancer Alliance has identified the following nine priority areas which require specific focus to ensure cancer is addressed holistically (many of the points correspond to the nine targets of the World Cancer Declaration):

1. Access to cancer treatment;
2. Early detection and treatment;
3. Patients' right to healthcare;
4. Appropriate cancer training and education for healthcare workers;
5. Addressing cancer stigma;
6. Importance of psycho-social care for cancer patients and their families;
7. Re-engineering the health system to ensure integrated cancer services;
8. Addressing the negative impact of poverty on delivery of services; and
9. Collaboration between the government, NGOs, NPOs and CBOs to improve the spread of service delivery.

These will be unpacked in a series of policy documents and factsheets which will be issued by the Cancer Alliance during 2017.

“It’s clear then that a cancer treatment overhaul is necessary in the health system if we want to reduce the very high numbers of patients in South Africa, and of subsequent deaths,” Greeff says.

“As things stand, there are too many gaps in the treatment pipeline. We need to stand together to change the status quo urgently.”

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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