

Press Release

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South African Institute of Race Relations
The power of ideas

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National Cancer Survivors Day – 4 June 2017

New IRR report says South Africa's politicians need new policy focus on cancer

The IRR has released a report on the extent to which cancer and other non-communicable diseases affect South Africans. The report was released to coincide with National Cancer Survivors Day this coming Sunday, 4 June 2017.

IRR healthcare analyst and report author, Tawanda Makombo, said: "Cancer has a devastating effect on communities and households in South Africa. This is particularly true for poorer households, who struggle to afford treatment and care options. Healthcare policy debates in South Africa have tended to focus on HIV/AIDS, the state of healthcare facilities, and, of late, healthcare financing models and the NHI proposal.

To that list we think the government and political leaders should add a new focus on non-communicable diseases such as cancer, and to that end we have released a report setting out some background data on how the diseases affect South African communities."

According to Makombo:

- Prostate cancer is the most common cancer affecting adult men in South Africa, accounting for 18% of all recorded cancers suffered by men.
- Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting adult women, accounting for 22% of all recorded cancers suffered by women. Among black women, however, cervical cancer is slightly more prevalent than breast cancer.
- Leukaemia is the most common cancer affecting young people in the country.
- South Africa's recorded cancer death rate is 117 deaths per 100 000 people per year. This is higher than that of countries such as Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, Mexico and Mozambique. It is on a par with recorded cancer death rates in Israel and Egypt and somewhat lower than rates in the established middle-income democracies of the United States and the United Kingdom.

Makombo said: "We want to credit, in particular, Professor Michael Herbst and his colleagues at the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) whose efforts have been very important in helping to collate and understand some of the data we have published – and we encourage the media to make contact with Professor Herbst for expert comment on cancer in South Africa."

Readers are warned that much of the available cancer data on South Africa is sourced via voluntary reporting from laboratories.

See the attached report for explanations.

Ends.