

Specific to Older Persons	Inclusive of Older Persons
National guideline on prevention, early detection or identification, and intervention in physical abuse	National guidelines on home-community-based care
Guidelines for foot health at primary level	National guidelines on osteoporosis
Guidelines on Active Ageing	National guidelines on stroke and transient ischaemia attack
Interdepartmental strategy on elder abuse	Cervical cancer screening programme
Guidelines on cataract surgery	National rehabilitation policy
National guidelines for the prevention of falls of older persons	National guideline on long term domiciliary oxygen therapy
National guidelines on psychogeriatrics (draft)	National programme for the control and management of hypertension at primary level
National guidelines on the prevention and management of substance abuse amongst older persons (draft)	National guidelines on the prevention of chronic diseases of lifestyle (including supportive educational material)
Guidelines on Early detection and management of Arthritis/Rheumatism in Older Persons	National programme for control and management of diabetes type 2
Golden hints for golden years	Management of obesity
Playing cards with HIV/AIDS messages	Screening programme for prostate cancer
Breast cancer information document	

## 4.2 Health Services For Older Persons

### Primary health care services

Primary health care is free to all older persons. The primary health care package includes prevention and the care of conditions or diseases of older persons. Specific responsibilities of primary health care include:

- Identification of older persons with common chronic conditions or diseases associated with ageing
- Identification of older persons at risk
- Health promotion activities
- Case management including therapeutic education, emergency care, management of referrals from other levels of care and where facilities allow, treatment of certain conditions
- Pharmaceutical services for common chronic conditions
- Liaison with community-based organisations dealing with older persons

Currently 3 500 primary health care clinics are available in South Africa, of which 500

were built during the past five years. Local authorities also provide health services through community health centres. The restructuring of health services in South Africa envisages the amalgamation of provincial clinics and local authority community health centres into one district health system.

### **Secondary health care services**

Older persons in receipt of a social grant, receive services free of charge at public hospitals. Secondary level hospitals normally have different specialist services dealing with specific diseases or conditions that pertain to, but are not exclusive to older persons. The main responsibilities of secondary health care services include:

- Inpatient diagnosis and treatment
- Outpatient services
- Care of older persons with complex or rare conditions is shared with tertiary level services
- Laboratory services
- Referral to specialist care
- Support to primary level health care
- Pharmaceutical services - supply of specialised drugs and drugs for chronic conditions of older persons
- Rehabilitation services, including psycho-social services
- Training and education of health service professionals

### **Tertiary health care services**

In South Africa there are seven medical schools directly linked to tertiary hospital complexes, offering specialised services. Only three departments of geriatrics exist in South Africa of which only one is operational. Responsibilities of tertiary health care services include:

- Provision of a full range of specialised medical, surgical, psychiatric diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitation services
- Specialist multi-disciplinary care for older persons with complex and multiple chronic conditions or diseases
- Support to secondary level hospitals, doctors and other care providers
- Generating detailed reports on older persons' treatment for other levels of service
- Research and quality of care audits
- Training and education of health service professionals
- Specialised support services, including specialist pharmaceutical services

### **Community care and support**

Communities make a significant contribution to the care and support of older persons in South Africa. Relatives, faith-based organisations and non-governmental organisations contribute to the health and general well-being of older persons in a number of ways:

- Attending to physical needs where assistance is required, for example, washing hair, cutting nails, doing washing and shopping
- Inspecting the home environment to reduce physical obstacles and ensure general hygienic conditions
- Providing recreational activities
- Noting changes in physical and mental conditions and taking appropriate action such as referral to a doctor, social worker or community health worker
- Arranging for older persons to attend a hospital or a clinic

The importance of the community to provide of care and support of older persons should not be underestimated. Communities provide services to complement the services provided by the government. Although community involvement lessens the burden of the public health sector to some extent, it is not seen as an alternative to the public health sector. Given the levels of poverty within many communities, the government is mindful of the need to ensure that the burden of care does not rest solely with communities. An important aspect of community involvement is that many of the caregivers are women who are of retirement age and have the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills.

## **4.3 Disability**

### **Nature and extent of disability**

According to the 1996 Census, seven percent of people in South Africa have been classified as disabled people. Sight disabilities are the most common, followed by physical disabilities, hearing impairment, mental disabilities and multiple disabilities. The proportion of disabled people within age groups increases with age. There are also marked differences in levels of disability amongst the population groups in South Africa.