

**SOUTH AFRICA**



# BRIDGING THE GAP

## Advancing Equitable Access & Innovation in Prostate Cancer Care in South Africa

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**South Africa** has made measurable progress in prostate cancer awareness and survivorship support, yet significant disparities remain in early detection, diagnostic access, and equitable treatment availability. Urban-rural gaps, long waiting times in public facilities, and uneven access to advanced therapies limit patient outcomes.

With a **Level 3 – Emerging** prostate cancer maturity, South Africa is at a pivotal stage where structured national policies, improved screening strategies, and treatment standardization can deliver substantial improvements in outcomes.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Progress Amid Persistent Gaps

Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers affecting men in South Africa, with a high incidence in Black South African men and late-stage presentation still common. Public awareness campaigns by cancer advocacy organizations and NGOs have improved recognition of prostate health issues.

However, fragmented diagnostic pathways, limited coverage of PSA testing in public healthcare, and high out-of-pocket treatment costs in private care continue to create barriers to timely and effective treatment.



**South Africa Ranks at Level 3 – Emerging Prostate Cancer Maturity Framework**



# PROSTATE CANCER IN SOUTH AFRICA

## Current Landscape and Strategic Gaps

Pillar	Current Status	Strength	Policy Action
Early Detection & Diagnosis	Most cases detected at advanced stages due to lack of organized screening and limited awareness among high-risk men. PSA testing largely opportunistic in urban centers.	Public health awareness drives from NGOs such as CANSA and Prostate Cancer Foundation.	Implement a national risk-based screening framework targeting men over 50 and high-risk groups (e.g., Black South African men starting at 45), expand PSA and DRE availability in public primary care, train healthcare workers in rural areas.
Biomarker & Molecular Testing	Limited availability in public sector; advanced imaging and genetic testing mostly restricted to private care.	Presence of some specialized oncology centers with diagnostic capabilities in major cities.	Integrate biomarker testing into public oncology services, and foster public-private partnerships to subsidize costs for low-income patients.
Treatment Access	Modern therapies (e.g., advanced hormonal therapy, radiotherapy technology) available mostly in urban tertiary hospitals or private sector; delays in public sector radiotherapy due to equipment shortages.	Tertiary hospitals in provinces like Gauteng and Western Cape provide multidisciplinary care.	Expand radiotherapy infrastructure in underserved provinces, include essential prostate cancer drugs on the national Essential Medicines List (EML), and reduce public sector waiting times through resource reallocation.
Clinical Guidelines	National oncology guidelines exist but implementation varies; some facilities follow international protocols while others lack capacity to fully comply.	Strong academic institutions producing oncology research and guidelines.	Standardize prostate cancer clinical guidelines nationwide and conduct periodic compliance audits with targeted clinician training.
Palliative & Survivorship Care	Palliative services expanding, but rural access is limited; psychological support and rehabilitation services uneven.	NGO-led programs offer community-based palliative support.	Scale up palliative care workforce training, integrate survivorship care plans into hospital discharge protocols, and ensure consistent pain management medication supply across provinces.





## CONCLUSION & Call to Action

South Africa is in a transition phase from fragmented prostate cancer services to a more structured and equitable system. To reach higher maturity levels, the country must invest in a **coordinated national strategy** that addresses early detection, equitable diagnostics, streamlined treatment access, and integrated survivorship care.



### KEY POLICY PRIORITIES

- 1 Expand Diagnostic Capabilities:** Equip public hospitals with advanced imaging and biomarker testing, ensuring affordability and regional coverage.
- 2 Launch a National Prostate Cancer Screening Program:** Implement targeted PSA and DRE screening for high-risk populations with integrated referral pathways.
- 3 Standardize and Enforce Clinical Guidelines:** Ensure consistent care quality across provinces through training, auditing, and support systems.
- 4 Close the Urban-Rural Treatment Gap:** Increase public sector oncology capacity, reduce treatment delays, and procure essential modern therapies for public hospitals.
- 5 Strengthen Palliative and Survivorship Services:** Provide equitable access to symptom control, mental health support, and rehabilitation programs for all survivors.