**TB still SA's leading cause of death**

Tuesday, June 15, 2021

A Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) report has revealed that Tuberculosis remained the main leading cause of death in South Africa between 2016 and 2018.

The report, titled "Mortality and causes of death in South Africa: Findings from death notification, 2018", provides information on levels, trends and patterns in mortality and cause-of-death statistics by socio-demographic and geographic characteristics.

"The mortality indicators and cause of death indicators presented in this report are critical indicators on the health status of the South African population," said Stats SA.

"The main focus is on 2018 death occurrences; however, information on deaths that occurred during the period 1997 to 2017 is included in order to show trends in mortality. The cause-of-death statistics in this statistical release provide information on the leading underlying natural causes of death, patterns and trends in non-natural underlying causes of deaths, as well as comparison between immediate, contributing and underlying causes of death," said Stats SA on Tuesday.

According to the report, mortality levels are declining in the country as indicated by the downward trend in the number of registered deaths since 2007.

The results showed that the total number of deaths registered at the Department of Home Affairs and processed by Stats SA in 2018 were 454 014.

While the occurrence of deaths in the country continued to decline, it differed by age and sex. The age group 65-69 had the highest proportion of deaths in 2018 at 8.4%, followed closely by age group 60-64 at 8.3%. Conversely, the lowest proportions of deaths were observed in age groups 5-9 years and 10-14 years at 0.6 % and 0.8%, respectively.

With regard to sex, between 1997 and 2018, there were more male than female deaths from age 0 to age group 65-69; whereas female deaths consistently exceeded male deaths for ages 70 years and above.

The results further indicate that in 2018, the highest sex ratio (167 male deaths per 100 female deaths) was observed in the age group 20-24 years. The pattern was observed for four consecutive years, between 2015 and 2018.

For the period 2016-2018, Tuberculosis remained the main leading cause of death in South Africa.

Diabetes mellitus, the report found, remained as the second leading underlying cause of death whose proportions have been increasing over the three years.

"According to the global burden of diseases, two of the top five leading underlying causes of death for males were communicable diseases (tuberculosis and HIV) whilst among females, there was only one communicable disease (HIV) with the rest being non-communicable diseases."

Stats SA said the results showed that nine of the ten leading causes of death were the same for both sexes, although with different rankings.

"Tuberculosis was the leading underlying cause of death for males, accounting for 7.2% of male deaths while the diabetes mellitus was the leading underlying cause of death amongst females accounting for 7.7% of female deaths."

"Human immunodeficiency virus [HIV] disease (4.6%) was the second leading cause of death for the males, followed by other forms of heart disease (4.5%). Cerebrovascular diseases (6.1%) was the second leading underlying cause of death for females."

"In 2018, the most significant decline amongst females were deaths due to tuberculosis which declined from 5.2% in 2016 to 4.8% in 2018. Uniform to this, there was a significant decline in tuberculosis deaths from 7.2% in 2015 to 7.6% in 2018 among males."