

Life expectancy in South Africa could plummet as health service faces cuts

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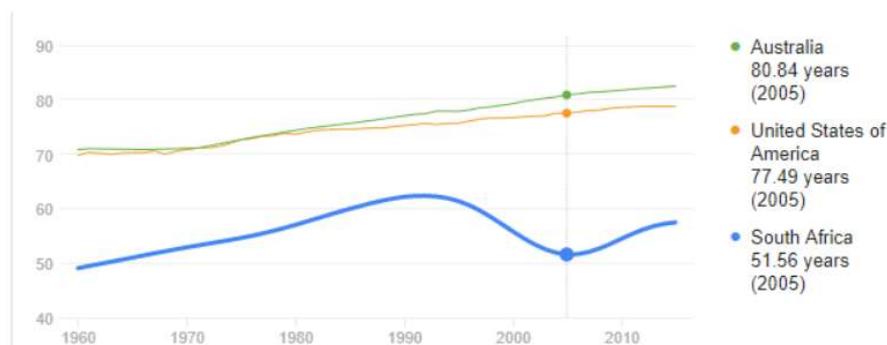
After a decade where SA's life expectancy soared, a weak economy could set it all back...

It's both a bleak warning, and a sad commentary of how the country is being run: Yet it seems adjusting to a stagnating economy could limit our life expectancy.

The SA Health Review – published by Health Systems Trust – have cautioned that upcoming cuts to services have the potential to undo all the hard work over the last decade that has ensured citizens are living longer.

Life expectancy in South Africa

From 2005-2015, life expectancy has shot up by something between six years (World Banks) to ten (StatsSA).



(World Banks)

However, the brains behind the Health Review are pointing towards the limited expenditure in their industry to make a rather worrying forecast; they believe that these cuts will undo the hard work that's helped South Africans live longer.

What cuts are being proposed to SA's health service?

- Health expenditure will increase in this financial year by a mere 1.1%.
- By next year, this increase will be a tiny 0.8%.
- In 2018/19, there will be a cut in spending of R142-million (0.1%).

Treasury official Mark Bletcher has defended the proposed cost reductions, and pointed to the NHI initiative as a way to fund their health services further

“The slowdown in growth may last for a long time, impacting on health budgets negatively, but the National Health Insurance (NHI) has the potential to reverse this trend through additional revenue streams to fund health services.”

Is SA's health industry in crisis?

This comes as the Rand has depreciated more than 38% against the US Dollar in the last five years, and as an extra 400,000 patients a year join the HIV treatment programme – the proposed cuts are, at best, horrifically timed.

Over the last four years, 5,500 positions in the health industry have been slashed as the service desperately tries to fall in line with budget proposals.

The government are effectively banking solely on NHI to produce a financial stability that the economy can no longer do.

By Tom Head, The South African