

How public-private partnerships are solving healthcare backlog – The South African 2 May 2019

South African public healthcare system is without a doubt in a state of crisis, and has been so for a very long time. Dr Rosy Ndhlovu, founder of Innovo Mobile Healthcare is working towards fixing that.

There is currently a shortage of facilities, resources and manpower in South Africa. Hospitals do not have enough staff. Doctors and nurses are overworked.

While the National Health Insurance (NHI) is in the works, it's still a number of years away. It won't immediately address one of the biggest problems around healthcare – access.

Urban areas offer patients the opportunity to visit government facilities. But in rural and peri-urban areas many people have to travel long distances just to reach their nearest clinic or hospital.

Bringing healthcare to the masses

Innovo is one of the companies trying to create collaborative solutions that will bring healthcare to these under-served groups. Dr Rosy Ndhlovu, founder and managing director of **Innovo Mobile Healthcare**, explains:

“Innovo focuses on developing collaborative partnerships such as the collaboration with Keystone Medical to deliver innovative services to women who would otherwise not have the ability to screen their breast for breast cancer.”

She adds that the partnership has allowed Innovo Mobile Healthcare to extend screenings to now include both cervical and breast cancer checks. The generous donation of a mobile mammography from one of Innovo's sponsors made this possible.

Breast cancer in South Africa

Regular check-ups are critical according to Dr Ndhlovu. Furthermore, detecting cancer in its early stages can mean the difference between life or death. Dr Ndhlovu adds:

*“Breast cancer is the most **common type of cancer** among South African women, according to the World Health Organisation. **One in 28 women** are diagnosed in their lifetime. Having an annual mammogram is an empowering decision for women.”*

A quick and convenient breast mammogram takes less than 20 minutes at various locations across the country. It's now easier than ever to get that vital annual screening at clinics close to one's work or home.

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among South Africans. It will affect one in every 41 women in the country, of which eight will die. However, cervical cancer can be detected with a pap smear test and is curable if caught early.

In addition, Innovo is a 100% black-owned company with mobile clinics across the country. In the last five years, Innovo has 47 000 clinical services and treatments, with more than 33 457 patients registered.



Mobile clinic. Photo: Supplied.

Increased focus on healthcare

According to a press release issued by Innovo, these treatments include 7 621 HIV tests. In addition, Innovo attended to 7 355 dental patients, and conducted approximately 3 340 eye tests.

The state also increased spending on healthcare. The annual budget has increased from R86 billion in 2009 to just over R205 billion in 2018. But it is still some way short of providing the basic health services required by the population. Dr Ndhlovu concludes:

“But even with the current budget allocated to the Department of Health, the government alone cannot deliver effective primary and secondary healthcare.

Affordable and accessible healthcare is only achievable through the creation of concerted partnerships, along with embracing technology and innovation.