

Integrated person centered care for improved coordination

South Africa (SA) faces significant challenges within its healthcare system, marked by a dual burden of disease, including high prevalence rates of HIV, tuberculosis (TB), and non-communicable diseases (NCDs), exacerbated by fragmented service delivery. This fragmentation often leads to inefficiencies in patient care and suboptimal health outcomes. Improving population-level health outcomes requires an integrated approach that bridges the gap between individuals seeking healthcare and providers, strengthens social support networks, ensures continuity of care across the lifespan, and fosters collaboration among primary caregivers, specialists, and multiple sectors of society.^[1]

Adopting an integrated person-centered care (IPCC) model may help address these challenges by reducing stigma, enhancing patient satisfaction, and improving treatment adherence. This approach tailors healthcare to individual needs by improving accessibility, delivering culturally appropriate and supportive services for diverse populations, and actively engaging families, communities, and stakeholders in care planning and delivery.^[2]

Furthermore, multimorbidity is emerging as a growing epidemic in SA, necessitating a more responsive healthcare system. Strengthening the system requires empowering patients in self-management, enhancing communication strategies, integrating community health workers into service delivery, and promoting cross-sectoral coordination in person-centered care.^[3,4] Reducing the burden of multimorbidity also demands effective integration across all levels of care—from individual healthcare interactions to broader societal structures—anchored in shared values and a collective vision for the future.^[1]

Ensuring access to high-quality, affordable, and user-appropriate assistive technologies is also essential for integrated care in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. These technologies should support healthcare professionals working in multidisciplinary teams to provide comprehensive, person-centered services, including

prevention, health promotion, and rehabilitation, fully integrated across various levels of the health system. Achieving this requires capacity-building initiatives to equip healthcare professionals as advocates for behavioural change, policy reforms, and increased awareness of universal health coverage, ultimately facilitating equitable access to essential healthcare services.^[5]

Recognising the importance of this approach, the South African Department of Health organized a stakeholder workshop in November 2024 to explore ways to integrate stand-alone programs into primary healthcare and develop a draft framework for improving care coordination.^[6] The workshop proceedings are expected to inform the implementation of Integrated Person-Centered Care, leading to improved care coordination and better health outcomes.

D Basu
Editor

1. Cloninger CR, Salvador-Carulla L, Kirmayer LJ, et al. A time for action on health inequities: foundations of the 2014 Geneva declaration on person-and people-centered integrated health care for all. *Int J Pers Cent Med* 2014;4(2):69-89.
2. Duffy M, Madevu-Matson C, Posner JE, Zwick H, Sharer M, Powell AM. Systematic review: Development of a person-centered care framework within the context of HIV treatment settings in sub-Saharan Africa. *Trop Med Int Health* 2022;27(5):479-493. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tmi.13746>
3. Zezai D, van Rensburg AJ, Babatunde et al. Barriers and facilitators for strengthening primary health systems for person-centred multimorbid care in low-income and middle-income countries: a scoping review. *BMJ Open* 2024;14(11):e087451. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2023-087451>
4. Berner K, Tawa N, Louw Q. Multimorbidity patterns and function among adults in low-and middle-income countries: a scoping review protocol. *Syst Rev* 2022;11(1):139. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-022-02001-0>
5. du Toit R, Keffe J, Jackson J, Bell D, Minto H, Hoare P. A global public health perspective: facilitating access to assistive technology. *Optom Vis Sci* 2018;95(9):883-888. <https://doi.org/10.1097/OPX.0000000000001270>
6. National Department of Health. Integrated Person-Centered Care and Improved Coordination Workshop. Johannesburg, South Africa; 2024.