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## SOUTH AFRICA NEEDS MORE NURSES TO SUSTAIN THE HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY

*17 February 2015:* The 2015 Provincial Budgets and Expenditure Review revealed that at the end of 2013, only 4% of nurses were 30 years or younger in age while, in contrast, more than 45% of nurses are 50 years of age or older. The statistics highlight the need for more to be done to promote the role that nurses play within the healthcare industry and to encourage people to consider the profession as a career.

According to Dr Dominique Stott, Executive: Medical Standards and Services at PPS, nurses play a critical role in maintaining good levels of healthcare, as they are involved in all aspects of medical care and are an invaluable part of any medical team. “Nurses are not only responsible for critical activities such as monitoring, wound dressing, and general ward care, but they also play active roles in administration and ward management.”

From the time of admission to the time of discharge, a nurse is in charge of the general wellbeing and management of all aspects of patient care as delegated by doctors, she says. “A nurse must be able to perform basic health monitoring observations, such as taking temperature, heart pulse rate, blood pressure, and history.”

Dr Stott says nurses are also in control of administering medication and may also handle situations for emergency care should such an event arise in the ward.

“The nurse forms an important bridge between the family, the patient and the doctor where the family may feel more comfortable speaking to a nurse regarding the patient’s treatment and diagnosis, than to the doctor. Nurses often apply a softer approach in their ability to relate to the relatives of the patient, as they generally spend more time with the patients and visitors.”

She says that nursing is a career, which can lead to a number of opportunities within the clinical setting, such as; theatre nurses, midwifery, as well as nursing administration and teaching. “These opportunities can often lead to a lifetime of personal growth and development in a profession focused on caring for others.”

Dr Stott points out that due to the lifting and carrying of heavy objects, nurses are particularly vulnerable to back and neck problems and are susceptible to injury in the workplace. “Nurses must ensure that they have their own individual insurance benefits - for example income protection, medical aid and dread

disease cover - to ensure they are financially prepared in the event that they are no longer able to work in their occupation as a result of becoming disabled, severely injured or critically ill.”

“Nurses are vital members of the medical management team and carry out essential work with the patients, which doctors are not qualified to do. Promotion of this vital medical profession should be a priority for the local healthcare sector,” concludes Dr Stott.

Anyone who is interested in pursuing a career in nursing should visit the South African Nursing Council website at [www.sanc.co.za](http://www.sanc.co.za).