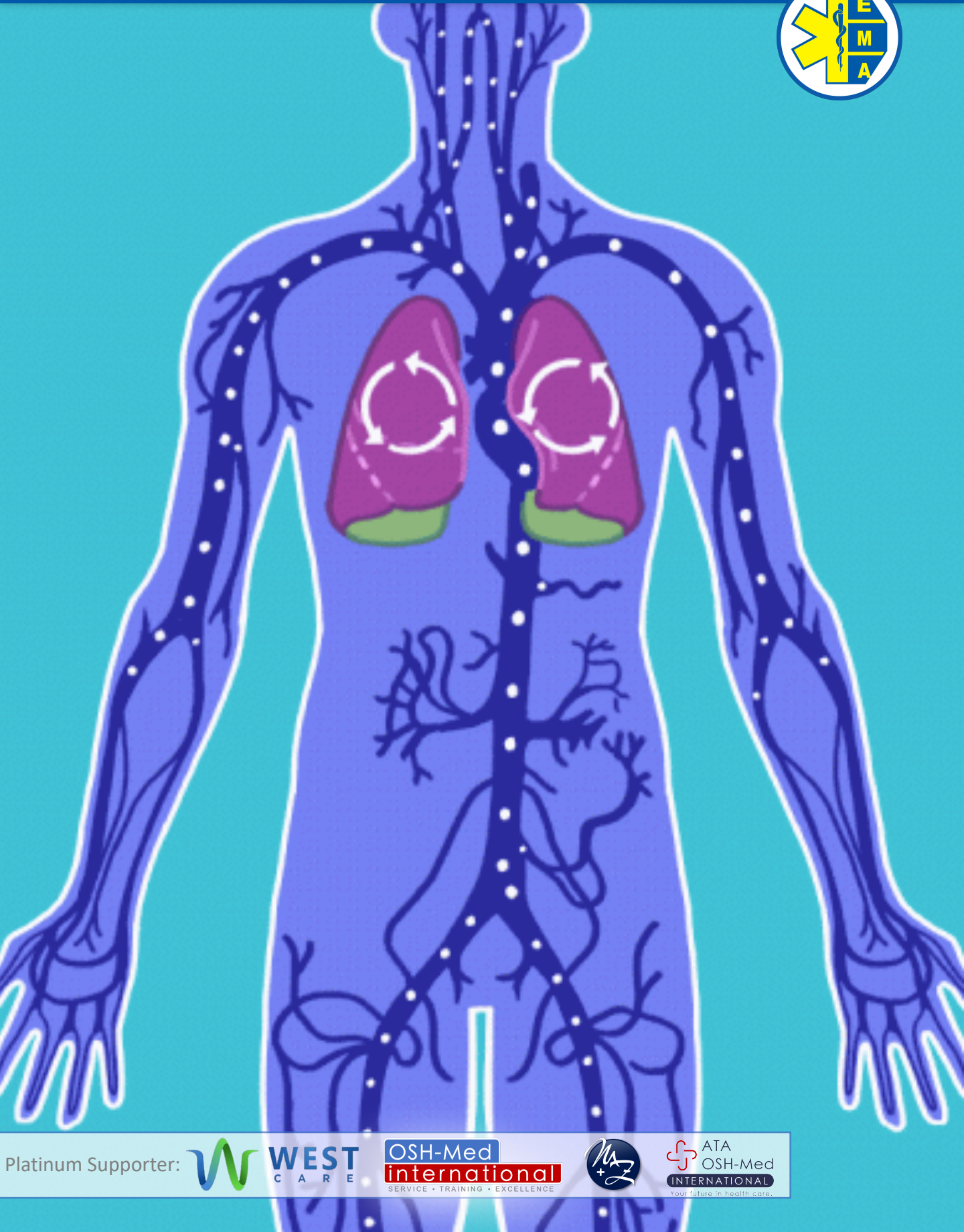


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Namibia's Silent Struggle: Taking a Stand Against Respiratory Diseases

As the dry season's dust settles and the air grows thick, a familiar health concern re-emerges across Namibia: respiratory illness. From the persistent cough of tuberculosis (TB) to the wheezing grip of asthma and the serious threat of pneumonia, diseases of the lungs and airways represent a significant health burden for the nation. Health experts are calling for increased public awareness and proactive measures to protect our collective respiratory health.



Respiratory diseases affect Namibians from all walks of life, but the very young, the elderly, and individuals with compromised immune systems, such as those living with HIV, are particularly

vulnerable. Socio-economic factors, including crowded living conditions in informal settlements, and environmental challenges like indoor air pollution from cooking fires and the pervasive dust of our arid landscape, create a perfect storm for these illnesses to thrive and spread.

Dr. Elina Amukwaya, a public health specialist, emphasises the gravity of the situation. "We see a continuous cycle of respiratory infections that can lead to long-term disability and are a major cause of hospital admissions, especially in children under five," she states. "These aren't just minor colds; they are serious conditions that impact families, livelihoods, and our healthcare system. The good news is that many of these diseases are preventable, and with the right knowledge, Namibians can take powerful steps to protect themselves and their families."

Understanding the Common Threats

Knowledge is the first line of defence. Here are some of the most prevalent respiratory illnesses in Namibia:

- **Tuberculosis (TB):** A bacterial infection that primarily attacks the lungs.¹ Namibia has one of the highest TB burdens in the world.² It is spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes.³ It is curable with a full course of antibiotics.



- **Pneumonia:** An infection that inflames the air sacs in one or both lungs, which may fill with fluid. It can be caused by bacteria, viruses, or fungi and can range from mild to life-threatening.
- **Asthma:** A chronic condition where the airways narrow and swell, producing extra mucus.⁴ This can make breathing difficult and trigger coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath. Dust, pollen, and smoke are common triggers in our environment.
- **Influenza (The Flu):** A contagious viral infection that attacks your respiratory system. While often mild, it can lead to serious complications like pneumonia, especially in high-risk groups.

Breathe Easy: Simple Steps for Prevention

Protecting your lungs is one of the most important things you can do for your overall health. Prevention is always better than cure.

- **Vaccination is Your Shield:** Ensure you and your children are up-to-date with all recommended vaccinations. The BCG vaccine for infants helps prevent severe TB.⁵ The annual flu shot and the pneumococcal vaccine (PCV) are crucial defenses against influenza and severe pneumonia.

- **Embrace Clean Air: Avoid smoking tobacco** and exposure to secondhand smoke at all costs. When cooking indoors with wood or charcoal, ensure **good ventilation** by opening windows and doors to let smoke escape. Regularly clean your home to reduce dust mites and mould, which can trigger asthma and other allergies.
- **Master Good Hygiene:** This simple act is one of the most effective ways to stop the spread of germs.⁶ Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20

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- seconds. Practice **respiratory etiquette**: cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your flexed elbow when you cough or sneeze, and dispose of tissues properly.⁷
- **Boost Your Body's Defenses:** A strong immune system is better at fighting off infections. Eat a **balanced diet** rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains like mahangu. Get regular, moderate exercise and ensure you get enough sleep to allow your body to rest and repair.

When Breathing Becomes a Battle: What to Do

If you are experiencing respiratory problems, it is crucial to act quickly and responsibly. Do not dismiss symptoms as "just a cough."

- **Seek Medical Help Promptly:** Do not wait. If you have a cough lasting more than two weeks, shortness of breath, chest pain, fever, or night sweats, visit your local clinic or hospital immediately. Early diagnosis and treatment can prevent serious complications and save lives. Community health workers are also a valuable resource for advice.
- **Commit to Your Treatment:** If you are diagnosed with a respiratory illness like TB or pneumonia, it is **absolutely vital** to take all your

medication exactly as prescribed by the doctor. For TB, this means completing the full six-month course under programs like DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course) to ensure the bacteria are completely eliminated. Stopping early, even if you feel better, can lead to a relapse with drug-resistant TB, which is much harder to treat.



- **Manage Chronic Conditions Diligently:** For those living with asthma or COPD, work closely with your healthcare provider to create a management plan. Know your triggers (e.g., dust during the windy season, smoke) and avoid them. Use your inhalers correctly, and always carry your reliever inhaler with you.
- **Rest, Rehydrate, and Recover:** When you are sick, your body



- needs energy to fight the infection. Get plenty of rest and drink lots of fluids like water, soup, and oshikundu to help thin mucus and soothe your airways.
- **Protect Your Family and Community:** If you have a contagious respiratory illness, you have a responsibility to protect others. Stay home if possible, wear a mask in public spaces, and avoid close contact, especially with children and the elderly.

By working together, practicing good hygiene, and seeking timely care, we can reduce the impact of these diseases. Let's make a collective effort to breathe easier and build a healthier, stronger Namibia for all.



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Health Series - Calendar: All 40 Weeks of Pregnancy - week 35

Your baby's lungs are now normally fully developed, so a premature birth isn't so bad anymore. It's time to prepare for the days after birth.

Weeks 35 of Pregnancy

Baby's Development

If your little one can't wait to be born, this is less and less of a cause for concern: From the 35th week of pregnancy, babies are usually viable outside the womb. Therefore, the doctor would probably no longer prescribe labor inhibitors if your baby's birth were already imminent.

The most important factor for your little one's viability: Their lung function is usually sufficiently developed. "Therefore, starting this week, if a premature birth is imminent, the doctor no longer needs to administer any medication to promote lung maturation," says Dr. Mirja Pagenkemper, who researches prenatal imprinting at the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf.

The fetus's lung tissue has now produced sufficient surfactant. This substance ensures, among other things, that the alveoli do not collapse. The lungs themselves are now prepared for breathing air, and the unborn baby's central nervous system is also sufficiently developed to control rhythmic breathing



movements – the baby can usually breathe independently.

It can also now regulate its body temperature quite well. "Although this – just like regulating blood sugar – often doesn't work without problems in premature babies in the 35th week," says Dr. Mirja Pagenkemper. "But pediatricians usually get it under control."

The unborn baby's skin has become a little smoother, and its arms and legs appear plumper. Your baby now has little room for gymnastics. However, if you don't feel your little one at all for a while, or feel them significantly less than before, please contact your gynecologist. They can determine whether your baby is doing well.

The mother's health

You are now in the 35th week. Your maternity leave begins these days. It's best to enjoy the calm before the storm for a while. You can already start thinking about what the first few days with your baby will be like. Even if you can't imagine it right now, given all your anticipation of the birth, many women suffer from a low mood, the so-called baby blues, about three days after giving birth. It's good to have dealt with this beforehand.

Having a child is exhilarating, but also exhausting and stressful: After the birth, suddenly nothing is the same as it once was. The baby blues are often related to the hormonal changes in a woman's body after childbirth. Suddenly, the body stops secreting pregnancy hormones, and milk production begins. The new mother is often tearful, moody, or afraid of not being able to live up to her new role.

But don't worry: This emotional jumble is completely normal. For most women, the baby blues disappear after just a few days. However, if the symptoms persist, are very severe, or if you have suffered from depression before, you should definitely consult a doctor and seek professional help.

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Health & Safety - Beyond Hard Hats: Why Namibia's Workplace Safety Goals Depend on Culture

As Namibia's industries—from mining and logistics to fishing and construction—strive for growth, the persistent challenge of workplace injuries remains a critical concern for both business leaders and the Ministry of Labour. In a rush to solve the problem, many companies are looking towards "cutting-edge" technological solutions like wearable sensors, robotics, and VR training.



In a scramble for solutions, a new trend is emerging: a rush toward "cutting-edge" technology. Companies are increasingly

tempted by the promise of wearable sensors that track worker fatigue, robotic arms to handle heavy lifting, and virtual reality (VR) headsets for "safe" training.

But international safety experts are now sounding a critical alarm: this "technology-first" approach, while well-intentioned, is dangerously flawed. It risks solving the wrong problem. Technology, they argue, cannot fix a broken safety culture; it can only amplify what already exists.

The Technology Trap

Many organizations, facing pressure from leadership to "do something" about rising incident rates, are chasing the latest gadgets as a silver bullet. It's an attractive proposition—a tangible, marketable investment that signals a commitment to safety.

However, as decades of experience in high-risk industries have shown, a wearable device will not stop an employee from taking a shortcut if the company culture implicitly rewards speed over safety. A robot can't prevent a spill if maintenance protocols are ignored. And VR training is useless if the lessons are forgotten the moment a supervisor demands a job be "done faster."

Technology is not transformational in reducing injuries—but **culture** is. A strong safety culture, where every employee from the CEO to the newest



hire feels a personal and collective ownership of safety, is the only foundation upon which technological solutions can effectively be built.¹

A 70% Reduction: A Case Study in Patience

This "culture-first" principle was proven in a recent international case study. One organization, facing a persistent and growing problem with material handling injuries, achieved a remarkable **70% reduction** in those incidents.

Crucially, this achievement did not happen overnight. It was the result of a deliberate, four-year strategy that began not with a purchase order for new tech,

but with the "slow burn" of cultural change.

The first year was dedicated exclusively to building this foundation. The safety team recognized they had to speak different "languages" to different audiences. For executives, they framed safety in terms of **business value, operational risk, and legal compliance**. For front-line workers, the message was about **empowerment, personal well-being, and a duty to oneself and one's colleagues**.

This initiative went beyond posters. The team was on the ground, modeling safety leadership. They created simple, engaging monthly safety themes, added near-miss reporting competitions to encourage proactive reporting without blame, and developed practical

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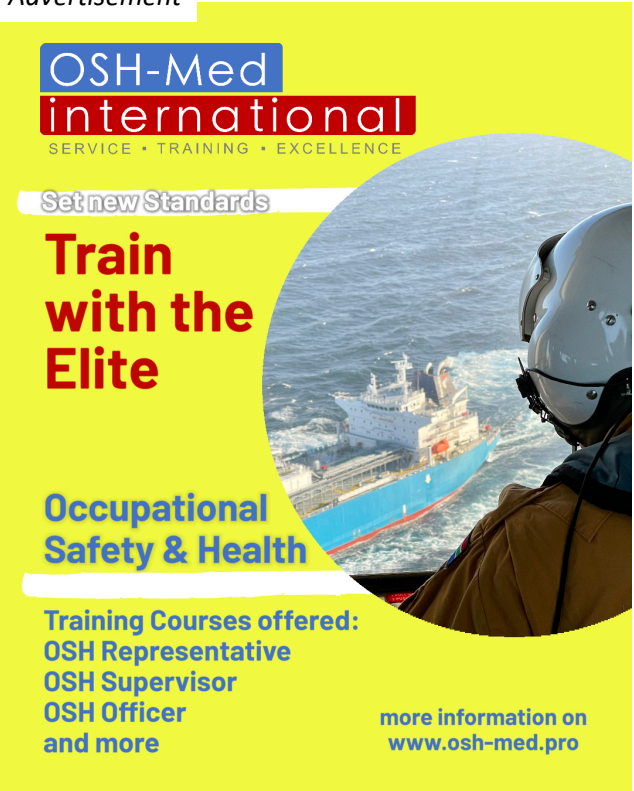
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continuing education for site safety leaders. By the end of that first year, a tangible shift had occurred: safety was no longer seen as a "policing" function but as a shared value.

From Culture to Concrete Action

With this positive foundation, the team then moved to **quantify and identify risk**. Instead of guessing, they conducted a structured **Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA)** and gap analysis at every single facility.

This was a multi-pronged approach. It combined quantitative data (injury rates, worker's compensation claims, near-miss reports) with invaluable qualitative data (direct job task observations, and in-depth interviews with employees and supervisors). This bridged the gap between operations and safety, fostering a synergetic relationship.

The findings led to practical, low-cost solutions: training programs were redesigned based on real-world feedback, inefficient or high-risk processes were re-engineered, and local teams were empowered to implement their own solutions.

Only after this groundwork was complete—after culture was established, risks were identified, and trust was earned—did the company begin to thoughtfully integrate technology. They piloted wearable sensors for specific, high-risk

tasks and introduced robotics in departments identified by the gap analysis. Because the culture was ready, these programs were not only quickly adopted but were highly successful. The technology was an *amplifier* for an already strong system, not a patch for a weak one.



The Namibian Imperative: Building Our Foundation

This lesson is directly applicable to every Namibian enterprise. Our **Labour Act (Act 11 of 2007)** provides a clear legal framework for the health and safety of employees. However, mere compliance is only the starting line. A truly safe workplace—one that is also productive and profitable—must be built on a culture of prevention.

This is where the role of professional training and development becomes non-negotiable. Building a safety culture requires competent, knowledgeable



people at every level.

A company cannot build a culture of safety without first investing in its people. This means partnering with accredited, Namibian-recognised institutions that provide the essential skills for a safe workplace. Organisations like **OSH-Med International**, which are fully accredited by the **Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation** and the **Health Professions Councils of Namibia (HPCNA)**, are vital partners in this mission. An effective safety culture relies on:

- **Trained OSH Representatives and Supervisors** who can confidently conduct a HIRA and identify hazards before they cause an incident.
- **Skilled Accident & Incident Investigators** who can move

beyond blaming an individual and find the true systemic root causes of an accident.

- **Empowered First Responders** on every shift, professionally trained in **First Aid Level A, B, and C** and **Basic Life Support (BLS)**, who can provide critical, life-saving care in the minutes before an ambulance arrives.

Without this bedrock of certified training and legal compliance, any investment in expensive safety technology is, at best, a gamble.

Technology is important and holds immense potential. But it is a tool, not a solution. As Namibian industries continue to grow and compete globally, the most successful, and respected companies will be those who remember to prioritise the foundational elements first: their people, their purpose, and their culture.

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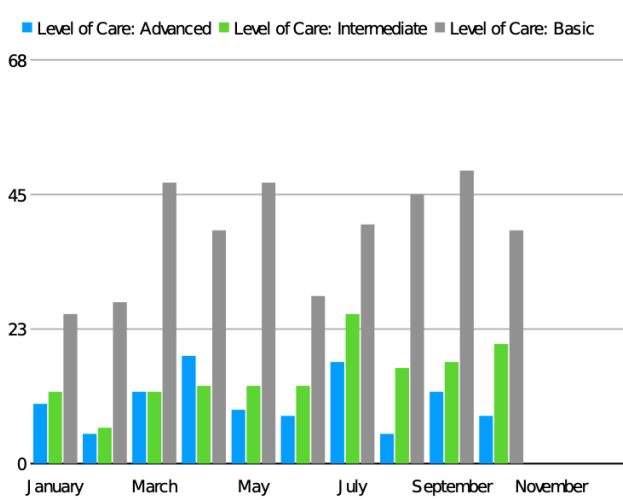
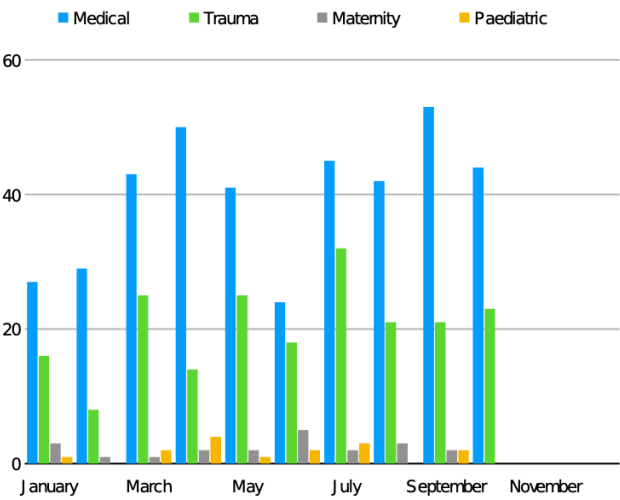
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January	27	16	3	1	10	12	25
February	29	8	1	0	5	6	27
March	43	25	1	2	12	12	47
April	50	14	2	4	18	13	39
May	41	25	2	1	9	13	47
June	24	18	5	2	8	13	28
July	45	32	2	3	17	25	40
August	42	21	3	0	5	16	45
September	53	21	2	2	12	17	49
October	44	23	0	0	8	20	39
November							
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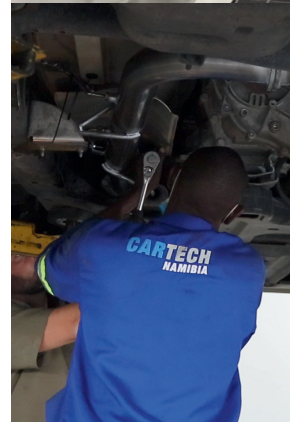
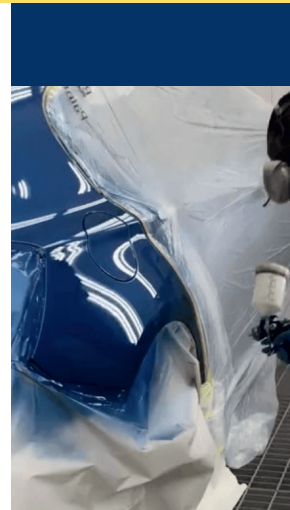
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