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Occupational Safety & Health and Medical

by



MAMMOGRAM COULD SAVE YOUR HEART AND WHY YOUR BRAAI MIGHT BE AT RISK

SILENCING THE 'INNER CRITIC' • HEALTH & SAFETY: WHY INDUSTRY IS FLIPPING THE SAFETY PYRAMID • FUN TIME - JOKE OF THE WEEK • E.M.A. WEEKLY EMERGENCY STATISTICS

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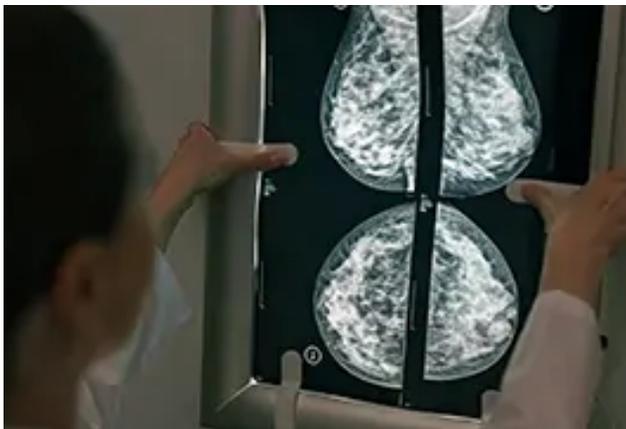
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Beyond the Lump: How Your Mammogram Could Save Your Heart—and Why Your Braai Might Be at Risk

Windhoek – As Namibia and its Southern African neighbours grapple with a "spiralling national health crisis," new medical research is transforming routine screenings into multi-purpose life-savers. While the region has long focused on infectious diseases, the 2025 and 2026 health summits in Johannesburg and Windhoek have shifted the spotlight to a more insidious threat: the intersection of metabolic health, diet, and cardiovascular disease.



The Heart in the Mirror: Mammograms as Early Warning Systems

For years, Namibian women have been encouraged to undergo mammograms to detect early signs of breast cancer. However, groundbreaking studies now suggest these screenings offer a "two-for-one" benefit. Radiologists are increasingly

identifying **Breast Arterial Calcification (BAC)**—calcium deposits in the breast arteries—which serves as a potent predictor of future heart disease.

"A mammogram is no longer just about the breast; it's a window into the entire vascular system," says a local oncology specialist. In a country where cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of non-communicable death, this discovery is a game-changer. By spotting these early calcifications, doctors can intervene years before a heart attack or stroke occurs.

The Braai Dilemma: Meat and the Diabetes Surge

While screening technology advances, our plates may be working against us. New data presented at the **2025 South African Diabetes Summit** warns that Southern Africa can no longer afford its "business-as-usual" approach to diet.

A massive global study, including data from over 1.9 million adults, has confirmed a direct link between red meat consumption and **Type 2 Diabetes (T2D)**. For a nation like Namibia, where the "braai" culture is central to social life, the findings are sobering:

- **Processed Meats:** Consuming just 50g daily (about two slices of ham) increases T2D risk by **15%**.
- **Unprocessed Red Meat:** A 100g daily serving (a small steak) is linked to a **10%** higher risk.

Furthermore, researchers highlight that high-fat, high-sugar diets cause "lasting





brain changes," essentially re-wiring the brain's reward system to crave these foods—a cycle that is notoriously difficult to break.

Tobacco-Style Warnings for the Supermarket Aisle?

The most controversial proposal gaining traction in SADC health ministries is the regulation of **Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs)**. Experts are calling for "tobacco-style" labelling on sodas, crisps, and pre-packaged meals.

Namibia already leads the region with some of the strictest tobacco laws, requiring pictorial warnings to cover **60%** of cigarette packaging. Health advocates argue that because UPFs are engineered to be addictive, they should be treated with similar gravity.

"We are seeing a generation of children whose brains are being conditioned by ultra-processed sugars before they even start

school," warns a public health official. "If we label cigarettes with images of diseased lungs, why are we not labeling sugary cereals with the reality of childhood obesity and tooth decay?"

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Regional Call to Action

The burden on Namibia's overstretched public health system is reaching a breaking point. With diabetes now a leading cause of death in South Africa and rising rapidly in Namibia, the message from the 2026 medical community is clear: **Prevention must be integrated.**

Mammograms

Can detect BAC, a precursor to heart disease.

Red Meat

Linked to a 10-15% increased risk of Type 2 Diabetes.

UPFs

Identified as "biologically addictive" substances.

Brain Health

High-sugar diets cause permanent "cravings" architecture in the brain.

As Namibia continues to roll out initiatives like the "**Nutrition-for-Health**" policy, the goal is to shift the national mindset. Whether it is choosing game meat over processed sausages or attending a routine screening, the choices made today are the only defence against the looming metabolic "silent killer."

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Silencing the 'Inner Critic': Importance to Master the Art of Self-Compassion

WINDHOEK – *Whether it's the pressure to succeed in a competitive job market, the weight of family expectations, or the curated "perfect lives" we see on social media, many Namibians are walking around with a harsh internal passenger: the Inner Critic.*



While we often pride ourselves on being a resilient nation—the "Land of the Brave"—experts warn that being too brave against ourselves can lead to a silent epidemic of low self-esteem.

The Voice in the Head

"We often speak to ourselves in ways we would never dream of speaking to a friend or even a stranger," says counselling psychologist. "In Namibia, there is a strong cultural emphasis on communal success. While this creates a beautiful sense of

'Ubuntu,' it can also make individuals feel like they are 'failing' the collective if they aren't constantly achieving."

The inner critic is that nagging voice that says, "You only got that promotion because they felt sorry for you," or "Why did you say that at the braai? Everyone thinks you're a fool." According to research, this internal dialogue isn't just annoying; it's a major driver of anxiety and depression.

The "Best Friend" Test

A central strategy for overcoming this, as highlighted in international psychological studies, is the "Friend Perspective."

Imagine your best friend came to you after making a mistake at work or feeling insecure about their appearance. Would you tell them they are a failure? Unlikely. You would probably offer words of comfort, perspective, and encouragement.

"The goal is to apply that same Namibian hospitality to our own minds," the psychologist explains. "When you catch yourself being self-critical, stop and ask: 'Would I say this to my cousin? To my sister?' If the answer is no, then why are you saying it to yourself?"

The Trap of Perfectionism

In our urban centres like Windhoek and Walvis Bay, the rise of "comparison culture" is fuelling low self-esteem. As we scroll through Instagram, seeing others enjoying luxury holidays or perfect family gatherings, our inner critic uses these images as a yardstick.



However, psychologists point out that perfection is a myth. Self-esteem isn't about *being* the best; it's about acknowledging your worth even when things go wrong. High self-esteem acts as an emotional "immune system," helping you bounce back from the inevitable droughts and storms of life.

Practical Steps to Reclaim Your Worth

If you find your inner critic is taking the driver's seat, local experts suggest these three steps:

1. **Give the Critic a Name:** By labeling that negative voice (e.g., "The Perfectionist" or "The Doubter"), you distance yourself from it. It becomes a thought you are *having*, not who you *are*.
2. **Practice Mindfulness:** Take five minutes every morning to simply breathe. Notice your thoughts without judging them. In the silence of the Namibian morning, learn to just *be*.
3. **Celebrate Small Wins:** Did you finish a difficult task? Did you help a neighbour? Acknowledge it. We are so quick to criticise our flaws but slow to toast our triumphs.

Breaking the Stigma

For a long time, mental health and "self-love" were seen as foreign concepts in many Namibian households. But the tide is turning. With more people seeking help through platforms like Lifeline/ChildLine and local clinics, the conversation is shifting from "What is wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?"

Boosting self-esteem is not about becoming arrogant. It's about recognising that every Namibian—from the streets of Katutura to the offices of the CBD—deserves to be treated with kindness, starting with the person they see in the mirror.

Are you struggling with persistent negative thoughts?

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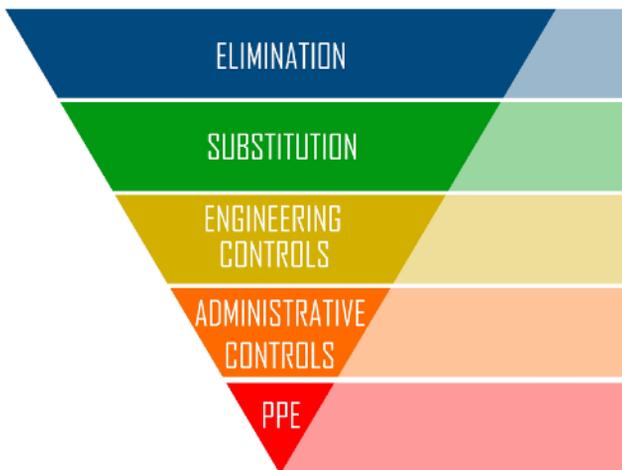
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Health & Safety - BEYOND THE HARD HAT: Why Industry is Flipping the Safety Pyramid

WINDHOEK – For decades, the sight of a neon yellow vest and a white hard hat has been the universal symbol of "Safety First" on Namibian mine sites, construction tiers, and fishing vessels. However, a global shift in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) philosophy is forcing Namibian safety officers to confront a hard truth: the gear we rely on most is actually the least effective way to keep workers alive.



HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS

Following a landmark 2026 report on "Rethinking the Hierarchy of Controls," Namibian industry leaders are being urged to move away from a "PPE-first" culture toward a system that designs danger out of the workplace entirely.

The Inverted Reality

The "Hierarchy of Controls" is a fundamental safety framework used by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation (MLIREC). It ranks safety interventions from most effective to least effective: Elimination, Substitution, Engineering Controls, Administrative Controls, and finally, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

"In Namibia, we often flip this pyramid upside down," says Johannes Shivute, a Windhoek-based OHS consultant. "Because PPE like gloves and boots is relatively

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cheap and easy to distribute, it becomes the primary line of defence. But the new research confirms that PPE is 'human-dependent'—it only works if a person wears it correctly every single second. In the heat of the Erongo salt pans or the fatigue of a 12-hour shift in a diamond mine, humans eventually fail.”

Rethinking the "Top" of the Pyramid

The March 2026 OHS directives suggest that "Elimination"—the most effective step—is being neglected because it is often seen as too expensive or complex. In the Namibian context, this means rethinking how we handle hazardous materials in our manufacturing sector or how we manage deep-pit excavations. "Elimination isn't just about stopping the work; it's about using technology to remove the human from the hazard," Shivute explains.

Recent innovations being trialed in the Husab and Rössing uranium mines include

autonomous drilling rigs and drone-based inspections for high-altitude structures. By using a drone to inspect a crane, the risk of a fall is not just "managed" by a harness (PPE); it is **eliminated** because the human stays on the ground.

The "Safety-II" Revolution

A core pillar of the "rethinking" movement is the shift from "Safety-I" (focusing on what goes wrong) to "Safety-II" (learning from what goes right).

Traditionally, Namibian companies wait for an "LTI" (Lost Time Injury) to happen before investigating. The new approach encourages managers at Walvis Bay's port or Windhoek's construction sites to talk to workers about how they *actually* get the job done safely every day despite the hazards.

"Our workers are the experts in their own safety," says a representative from the Mineworkers Union of Namibia (MUN).

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"When we rethink the hierarchy, we start asking the welder or the truck driver how we can engineer the risk away, rather than just giving them a thicker pair of gloves and hoping for the best."

The Cost of Compliance vs. The Cost of Care

Critics of the new hierarchy often cite the high cost of Engineering Controls—such as installing advanced ventilation systems or sound-dampening enclosures in factories. However, health advocates argue that the long-term costs of "PPE-only" strategies are higher.

Occupational diseases, such as silicosis in mining or noise-induced hearing loss in manufacturing, continue to burden the Namibian Social Security Commission. "A mask might cost 50 Namibia Dollars, but a lifetime of respiratory treatment costs millions," says Shivute. "By investing in the top of the hierarchy—Elimination and Engineering—companies aren't just being 'nice'; they are protecting their bottom line and the national economy."

A Call to Action for Namibian Firms

As the 2026 global safety standards begin to influence local legislation, Namibian firms are encouraged to:

1. **Audit the Pyramid:** Look at your safety budget. If 80% is spent on PPE and 0% on Engineering, your hierarchy is broken.
2. **Involve the Frontline:** Workers often know exactly how to eliminate a hazard but lack the authority to change the process.

3. **Prioritise Collective Protection:** Choose "Engineering Controls" (like a guardrail that protects everyone) over "Individual Protection" (like a harness that only protects one person).

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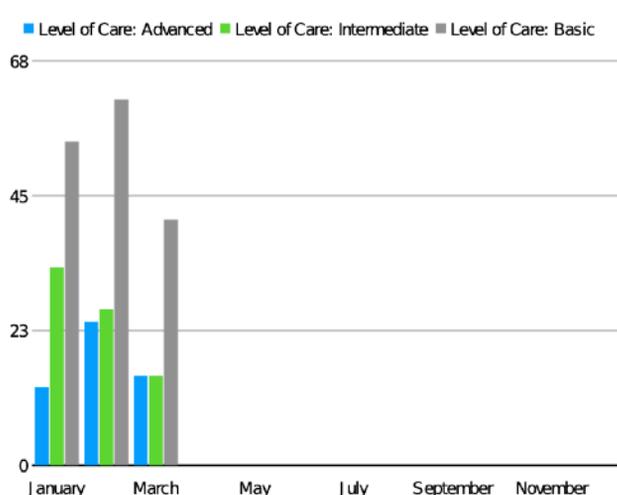
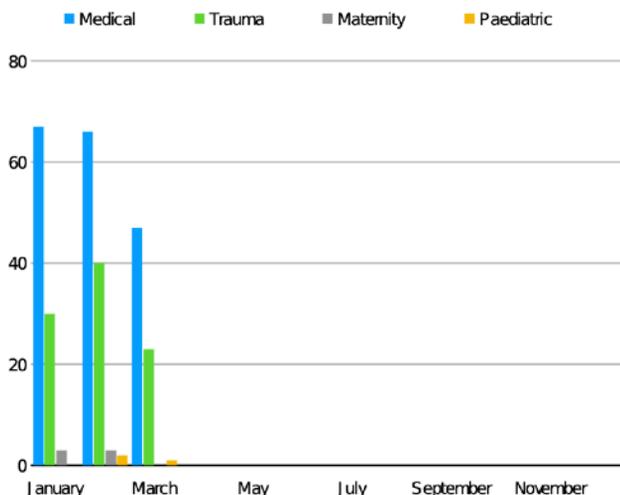
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April	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
May	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
June	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
July	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
August	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
September	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
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