

# Post-surgical death stats higher than TB, malaria & HiV combined

A [study](#) by researchers at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and University of Birmingham shows that 4.2-million people die each year within 30 days of surgery, more than from HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria combined (2.9-million).



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Half the post-surgical deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). There is also a significant unmet need for surgery in LMICs and researchers believe that if operations were provided for all patients who need them the number of global post-operative deaths would increase to 6.1-million per year.

The Lancet Commission on Global Surgery identified that 313-million surgical procedures are performed each year, but little is known about the quality of surgery globally, as robust postoperative death rates are available for only 29 countries. There is also a significant unmet need for surgery in LMICs and researchers believe that if operations were provided for all patients who need them the number of global post-operative deaths would increase to 6.1-million per year.

"It is estimated that approximately five-billion people globally are unable to access safe surgical treatment, and nearly 95% of these people live in low-and middle-income countries. Expanding surgical services to address unmet needs would add another 1.9-million post-operative deaths in LMICs each year. To avoid millions more people dying after surgery, planned expansion of access to surgery must be complemented by investment in to improving the quality of surgery around the world," says Bruce Biccadd, professor and second chair of UCT's Department of Anaesthesia & Perioperative Medicine and president of the South African Society of Anaesthesiologists (Sasa).

## Surgery can change lives

Researchers at the University of Birmingham's NIHR Global Health Research Unit on Global Surgery analysed available information to estimate how many people around the world die after operations - based on surgical volume, case-mix and post-operative death rates adjusted for country income.

"Surgery saves lives and can transform patients' quality of life, but this study shows that a large number of patients die in the immediate postoperative period. As efforts continue to increase access to surgery around the world, there is also an urgent need for research to improve the quality and safety of surgery," says Professor Dion Morton, Barling Chair of Surgery at the University of Birmingham and director of clinical research at the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

**Source:** University of Cape Town

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