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The trends, prevalence and determinants of non-communicable diseases among youth (15-24 years old) in South Africa (2005-2015)

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ABSTRACT

Background: South Africa is increasingly being burdened with non-communicable diseases that hinders social and economic development. While there has been extensive research conducted on non-communicable diseases, there has been dearth of research conducted on the trends, prevalence and determinants of non-communicable diseases among youth in the country. Thus, the main objective of the study was to assess the trends, prevalence and determinants of non-communicable diseases among youth (15-24 years old) in South Africa (2005-2015). **Methods:** Data were drawn from the 2005-2015 General households Surveys, surveys conducted annually by Statistics South Africa. The surveys were chosen as they are a national representation of the entire population including youth. The study population was youth aged 15-24 years' old who had reported being diagnosed with either diabetes or hypertension from 2005-2015. The total sample was a weighted distribution of 590,414 youth who reported having been diagnosed with either Diabetes (229 162) or Hypertension (361 253). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the socio-demographic, access and household characteristics of youth with and without Diabetes or Hypertension using percentage, frequency distributions as well as cross tabulations. The rate of disease prevalence was estimated using demographic methods. Three bivariate and multivariate logistics were conducted for diabetes, hypertension and all NCDs (diabetes and hypertension) to examine the association between the diseases and the socio-demographic, access and household characteristics. The interpretation of the results was made using odds ratios and a 95% confidence interval was used. **Results:** The results of the study found that NCDs were prevalent among youth, disproportionately affecting females. The study found that the NCD prevalence increased for females. Females were found more likely to be diagnosed with Diabetes or Hypertension when compared to males. The Diabetes and Hypertension prevalence increased with age, youth aged between 20-24 years (62%) had a high prevalence of both Diabetes and Hypertension when compared to youth aged 15-19 years old. Youth aged 20-24 were found more likely to be diagnosed with hypertension than diabetes. White and coloured youth were found more likely to be diagnosed with both diabetes and hypertension when compared to African/black youth. **Conclusions and policy implications:** There is a growing prevalence of Diabetes and Hypertension as the most common NCDs in South Africa, disproportionally affecting females and youth from various ethnic groups. This highlights the need for health policies and specific interventions to reduce non-communicable diseases among youth and urgently address the prevalence.

Keywords*: Non-communicable diseases, youth, Diabetes, hypertension, South Africa*