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Chapter 9: Development of a national strategic framework for a high-quality health system in South Africa

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- Despite a clear agenda for quality healthcare and significant annual expenditure, health system shortcomings continue to endanger the health and lives of South African citizens, resulting in a loss of confidence among users.
- Numerous quality challenges, including under- and over-utilisation of services, limited resources and inadequate referral procedures, are exacerbated by the high burden of disease and significant inequality between the public and private sectors relative to the populations they serve.
- Evidence suggests that promoting healthcare quality improves access and health outcomes as well as increasing life expectancy.
- The past two decades has seen a proliferation of policies and regulations aimed at quality assurance and quality improvement across both the public and private sectors, however, implementation has been poor.
- Despite multiple initiatives and pilots implemented to date, these projects have been largely unco-ordinated and fragmented, failing to achieve scalability, integration and coherence.
- There is a need for a strategic framework to integrate policy, organise service delivery, and monitor and evaluate the impact of initiatives, which seek to promote improvement of quality of health care.
- Quality frameworks provide guidance in addressing policy issues towards implementation of national imperatives for health care including universal access.
- In South Africa, the establishment of a strategic framework is essential for institutionalisation of quality care at the frontline, management and national levels; as well as synthesising of interventions performed to date.
- A national strategic framework that builds on and complements current policies and initiatives, provides stakeholders with a common language of quality, as well as a tool to facilitate policy coherence and locate initiatives in the quality cycle is proposed to institutionalise and guide planning, delivery and measurement of health systems quality in South Africa.
- The ultimate success of the proposed strategic quality framework is predicated upon a sound action plan for implementation.

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