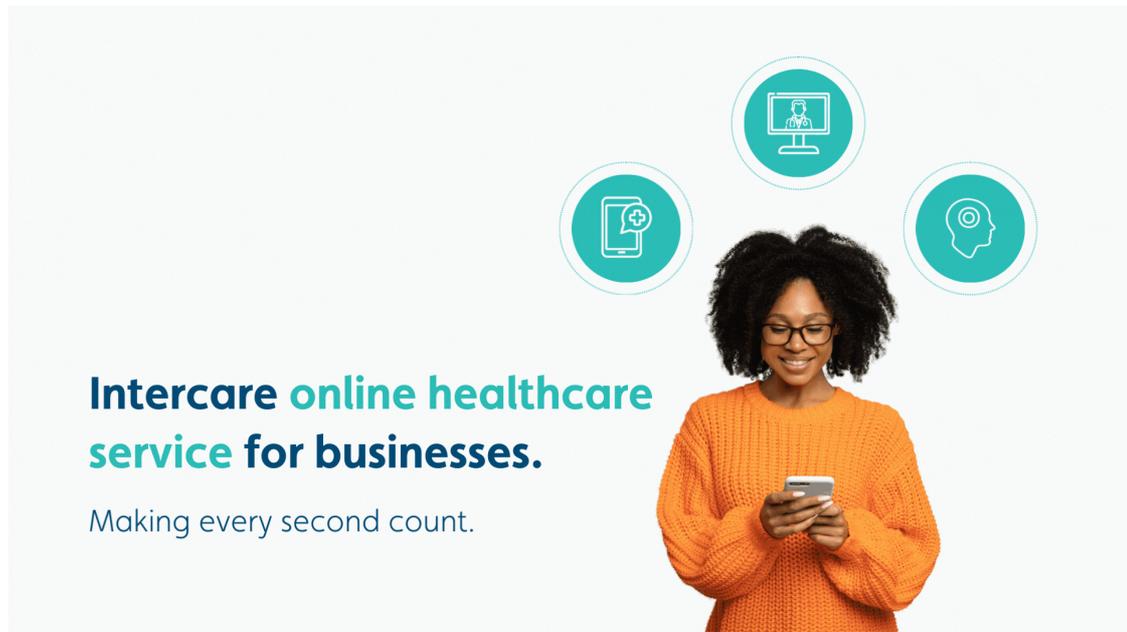


Advancements in digital technology helps improve healthcare access in South Africa

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The Intercare Group has introduced innovative online healthcare services, uniquely integrating these with its established physical network of world-class primary care facilities.



Intercare has launched a unique online healthcare offering, fully integrated with its existing physical network of world-class primary care facilities. By offering on-demand, cost-effective care from anywhere, these services address many of the barriers South Africans face in accessing affordable, quality healthcare, including distance, time, and money.

Growth in consumption of online services

Online or e-commerce has seen exponential growth in South Africa, driven in part by improved access to the internet. According to Statista, active internet users grew to 43.48 million in January 2023, an 11% increase from 2022. Of these users, 38% consume online services.

The healthcare imperative for businesses

According to OCSA statistics, South African businesses report absenteeism rates higher than acceptable limits. Absenteeism costs the South African economy around R15bn annually, with over six million workers, or approximately 15% of the workforce, on sick leave on any given day.

Mental well-being in South Africa is declining, with 36% of individuals distressed or struggling, according to the Annual Mental State of the World Report 2021. Findings from the 2022 Employee Benefits Survey Report show that health benefits are vital for 87% of employees, making offerings an integral part of the employee value proposition.

Considering the growing gap between demand for care and what healthcare systems can supply, as well as changing employee expectations, businesses across all industries should invest in the health of their workforce by leveraging technology advancements, expanded access to connectivity, and scalable, affordable, and efficient delivery mechanisms.

Intercare's online health services

"In structuring its online health services, Intercare has focused its capabilities around the most pressing needs of both employers and individuals. This includes helping to navigate the healthcare system by guiding when and where to seek care, integrating this with convenient, affordable alternatives to in-person care, and delivering services within this online environment that address priority health needs. In addition, it was important for Intercare to maximise the convenience, flexibility, and choice in how these services can be accessed," says Hendri Hanekom, managing director, Intercare Group.

Guidance on when and where to seek care

The first interaction with the healthcare system is typically an in-person visit at a clinic or GP. While this may be appropriate, many common primary care complaints can be adequately managed through either self-care or online interaction with a health professional. By identifying and channeling such cases to an online care setting, the associated costs of in-person care to both employers and individuals in time and money can be significantly reduced.

Intercare offers an internationally recognised and accredited AI-based medical guidance platform which interviews individuals regarding their symptoms and risk factors and then advises on the most appropriate level of care, with an accuracy of over 93%. Recommendations include emergency care, in-person visits, online consultations, and self-care. The platform is web-based and accessible from anywhere on any internet-connected device.

Alternatives to in-person care

Using best-in-class technology, Intercare has established a virtual healthcare facility staffed by experienced healthcare professionals, facilitating online consultations. This secure and confidential service is accessible from any device with an internet connection and caters to chat-based, telephonic, and video interactions. Healthcare professionals can send patient documents within the chat, such as a script, sick note, or referral letter. This virtual facility can be accessed directly or via seamless integration with the medical guidance platform.

Services that address priority health needs

While the scope of Intercare's online health services will continue to expand, Intercare has prioritised day-to-day primary care and mental health support services.

General Practitioners and Nurses deliver day-to-day primary care and cater to common everyday healthcare needs of adults and children, such as colds and flu, stomach bugs, bladder infections, and minor eye and skin conditions. Mental

healthcare is delivered by registered counsellors and psychologists and is augmented by rich self-help and educational tools. The online mental health service can support individuals with processing trauma, grief, and bereavement, coping with anxiety and depression, managing adjustment difficulties, and developing resilience to stress and burnout.

Flexible access options

Convenience, flexibility, and choice have always been central to Intercare's value proposition. The medical guidance platform is available 24/7, and the virtual healthcare facility offers extended operating hours seven days a week. In addition, on-demand services are offered, meaning an individual can access a health professional within minutes from anywhere. Various entry points are available, including direct integration with other platforms, SMS, or bespoke, white-labeled journeys. Health professionals within the online health facility can also remotely support on-site clinics, creating a hybrid care delivery model.

Intercare's online health services represent an attractive value proposition for employers or other businesses looking to either establish a wellness offering or to enrich an existing one. For a solution tailored to your needs, [contact us today](#).

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