

The Star

THURSDAY MAY 30 2013

Established 1887
47 Sauer Street, Johannesburg

A ray of hope

THE LAYMAN is often bombarded with information about serious diseases that pose a threat to his or her health. The latest is the warning that Africa in particular faces a "tsunami of high blood pressure", affecting more people than the immunodeficiency virus, which has cut a swathe across the sub-continent.

For instance, it is projected that hypertension will soar about 70 percent to 126 million people in Africa by 2025, up from 75 million five years ago.

The figures for diabetes are similarly disconcerting. In 2008 the continent had 27 million people living with diabetes – 7.5 percent of the world's total. It is estimated that the figure will rise to 50 million by 2030.

But hidden among these alarming reports this week was the announcement of a breakthrough in the treatment of cluster headaches. This is probably the worst pain that humans can experience – women with cluster headache have described an attack as worse than giving birth.

An article published in the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, Dr Elliot Shevel, the medical director of the Joburg-based Migraine Research Institute, has described a treatment that may offer an end to the pain and the suffering that afflict many.

This is a progressive and positive development amid all the despair.