



FOR PROFESSIONALS
SINCE 1941

SA DOCTORS STILL NOT CONFIDENT IN NHI DESPITE LOOMING RELEASE OF WHITE PAPER

08 October 2015: Most South African medical professionals are still doubtful over the implementation of the proposed National Health Insurance scheme into the South African healthcare system. According to a survey conducted by PPS among almost 400 medical professionals, only 19% of the respondents indicated that they had started taking the necessary steps to ensure ease of integration into the new NHI model once implemented.

Macy Seperepere, Manager: Professional Associations at PPS, says the survey also revealed that the respondents are not optimistic about the resurgence of the proposed Certificate of Need (CoN). When asked whether the implementation of the CoN would impact negatively on the medical profession, 87% of the respondents agreed with the statement.

The CoN is, according to Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi, amongst the proposals for the NHI White Paper, which is yet to be released for public comment. In an address at the annual Hospital Association of South Africa conference held in September which was aimed to update stakeholders on the progress of the National Health Insurance, the Minister advised that the CoN will serve as a policy aiming to direct and place healthcare workers in areas where they are most needed.

Commenting on the survey results, Dr Mark Sonderup, Vice-Chairman of the South African Medical Association (SAMA), says that the CoN in its original form disregards medical professionals' right to choose their place of work. "The CoN will essentially strip medical professionals of rights that are freely enjoyed by the rest of the nation, as they will be directed to work in an area as instructed by the legislation and policy."

He adds that as long as the NHI White Paper is held back, medical professionals will remain sceptical of the NHI-model as details remain speculative and sketchy. "In particular, the public healthcare sector remains beset with various issues including inadequate staffing levels, heavy patient loads, aging infrastructure and stock-outs, which in turn creates uncertainty amongst doctors as to whether a NHI scheme will succeed in South Africa."

When asked how confident these medical professionals are in the future of their profession, the confidence levels dropped two percentage points from the first quarter to 69% in the second quarter. "The respondents' confidence in the future of the healthcare system over the next five years remained unchanged at 44%," states Seperepere.

While the majority of the results from the survey reveal a negative sentiment in the medical profession this quarter, Seperepere says that respondents' confidence about remaining in the country for the foreseeable future remained unchanged at 74%.

"It is somewhat concerning that the majority of South African medical professionals who took part in the survey are still not supportive of the NHI-model, seeing that the Minister of Health is confident that the release of the NHI white paper is imminent," concludes Seperepere.