

General News from Government

Provincial vs National Healthcare Dilemma

Placing Gauteng's four academic hospitals (Chris Hani Baragwanath, Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg, Steve Biko and George Mukhari) under the control of the National Department of Health (DoH) is in line with provisions of the NHI Bill, said Gauteng Premier David Makhura in his State of the Province address. The announcement was a statement of intent and there were no time frames for the transfer. The four hospitals' combined budget this year was R14.2-bn, which was 28% of the total R50.8-bn health budget.

*Last year, the Office of Health Standards Compliance reported that only five out of 696 public health facilities met the 80% "pass mark" set by the DoH. According to the 2017 annual report of the Gauteng DoH, legal claims against the department for medical negligence sat at R21.96-bn, just over half of the department's R40.2-bn budget.

*The DoH failed to spend hundreds of millions of rand set aside for equipment in the last financial year, while blowing its budget for hospitals and administration, a situation that highlights its weak financial management, reported ***Business Day*** (4 July 2019). Despite improving its audit outcomes in recent years, the Gauteng DoH continues to struggle to stick to its spending plans.

*As part of a turnaround plan for public hospitals, boards need to be strengthened and given more power, and they need to take financial responsibility, wrote **William Gumede**, professor in the School of Governance at Wits University in ***Sunday Times***, (June 30 2019)

Gauteng

In August the Gauteng DoH advertised vacancies for 14 hospital CEOs as well as other critical posts, indicating that at least half of Gauteng hospitals are without permanent CEOs.

*Gauteng health MEC Dr Bandile Masuku, has revealed that the department has irregularly extended 12 contracts worth more than R1-bn a year. The contracts have been extended monthly for the past three years without going out to tender.

* WITS vice-chancellor Adam Habib has challenged Gauteng Premier David Makhura's call for the National Health Department to finance the province's debt-ridden teaching hospitals, saying centralising their funding without fixing their deep-seated administrative and governance challenges won't give patients a better deal.

R500-m to be recovered from former officials of Gauteng Health

Meanwhile Gauteng Health has instructed its lawyers to recover almost R500-m from its former head of department, Dr Tiego "Barney" Selebano, and two other officials, for their alleged involvement in the illegal procurement of an IT tender in 2013, reported ***IoL***.

The department has under-spent its R48-bn budget last year by R631-m, indicating that financial systems, especially with regard to procurement, are inadequate.

North West health chief arrested over Gupta-linked payments

Early in December Thabo Lekalakala, the suspended head of the North West health department, appeared in the Molopo magistrate's court in connection with the fraudulent appointment of a Gupta-linked company Mediosa, and his role in a premature R30-m. payment. It is alleged that Mediosa was appointed by Lekalakala without following proper tender procedures

Medicine shortages in state hospitals reach sickening levels

At least 40 kinds of medication are out of supply across the country - and not all of them have alternatives, reported ***Times Select*** (29 October 2019).

The Stop Stockout Project, an NGO supported by Médecins Sans Frontières, Section 27, the Treatment Action Campaign and the SA HIV Clinicians' society, had 639 unresolved cases from April. It was set up in SA so doctors could report medicine shortages.

Doctors in the public sector

Doctors trained overseas win battle to write SA exams *The Citizen*, 5 July 2019

In July it was reported that a group of 77 SA medical graduates who acquired their medical qualification abroad can now write their medical board examinations, after the HPCSA had imposed a limit of 120 graduates permitted to write the examination at its two scheduled sittings each year.

Cuban Doctors

Earlier this year 87 Cuban-trained doctors graduated under the Nelson Mandela Fidel Castro Medical Collaboration (NMFCMC) Programme – the largest group since its inception in 1996. 731 medical doctors have graduated from the programme and are currently employed in various public hospitals around the country.

Meanwhile the DoH is battling to recoup money from the 326 students who dropped out of the Cuban medical training programme..

State doctors

A Health Department policy implemented in 1993, allowing state specialists to do private work, has resulted in one in three specialists on the government's payroll also working in the private sector, according to SAPPF CEO, Dr Chris Archer. This temporary response to poor salaries paid to hospital specialists - called Remunerative Work Outside Public Service (RWOPS) - has led to abuse of the system, leaving state patients suffering, junior doctors unsupervised and medical students inadequately trained, said Archer.

2 600 Doctors in limbo

Thousands of doctors face an uncertain 2020 after the Department of Health missed a deadline for releasing the list of compulsory service placements, reported *The Citizen* (9 November 2019).

The doctors, as well as the SA Medical Association (SAMA), have complained that this has been a recurring problem for the past three years.

*According to research, published in the *SA Medical Journal* 84% registrars in the clinical medicine school at Wits University are suffering burnout

Training of nurses choked by red tape

“The training of nurses in 2020 is in jeopardy due to delays at key regulatory authorities, following a change in the curriculum and training requirements,” reported *Business Day* (26 August 2019).

According to the Council for Higher Education (CHE) the government's plans to switch to new qualifications require that the training institutions be re-accredited by the SA Nursing Council (SANC), which has largely not been done.

Failure to implement the new qualifications will choke the production line of new nurses, because institutions are barred from continuing with the old qualifications after the end of 2019.