***NEWS ON MEDICAL AIDS January – June 2020***

***Parents worry about medical cover for newborns in ICU***

Parents of newborns are becoming anxious as the issuing of new birth certificates has been put on hold by the department of home affairs in terms of the lockdown measures.

Newborns are covered under their mother’s scheme benefits. However, babies admitted into the neonatal intensive care unit (ICU), are covered in their own right. Most medical schemes require birth certificates for babies being registered as a dependant or on a different medical scheme.

According to Discovery Health, the medical scheme has amended its newborn registration process until the end of April. If the parents have not yet received the ID number, the baby will be activated, and the ID number collected at a later stage.

***Schemes fight for low-cost benefits***

Medical Schemes and health insurers have lodged appeals against the Council of Medical Scheme’s decision in December 2019 (Circular 80) that no primary health insurance plans would be permitted after March 2021. The decision ended a long-running process to develop low-cost benefit options that would be pared down, as cheaper versions of traditional medical scheme packages, reported ***Business Day*** (19 February 2020).

The Board of Healthcare Funders (BHF) and the Health Funders Association (HFA) have challenged circular 80 at the CMS appeals board. Both associations represent medical schemes and administrators, and each holds a dominant.

According to BHF head of research, Clinton Murove, at least a dozen parties had already filed appeals against the circular.

The HFA has lodged a joint appeal with DHMS, its administrator Discovery Health, four other medical schemes (Bankmed, Fedhealth, Profmed and LA Health) and two other administrators (Momentum Health and PPS Healthcare).

Discovery Life, which holds the licence for a primary care product, submitted its own appeal in December.

***Medical aids grilled over racial profiling***

“Medical aid schemes turned a blind eye to allegations dating back to 2014 that their contracted claims administrators racially profiled and abused black doctors when it was time to pay them,” reported ***IOL*** (28 January 2020). This emerged at the CMS inquiry into allegations made by African and Indian medical practitioners that medical schemes treated them unfairly.

Both advocate Nkosinathi Bhuka from Polmed and Lee Callakoppen from Bonitas admitted that their groups have not done any inquiries into whether administrators racially abused black practitioners.

Polmed’s Bhuka said his scheme was assured by Medscheme, its administrator, that using only practice numbers in dealing with doctors prevented racial profiling.

Discovery Health Medical Scheme denied racial bias in its fraud, wasteful care and billing abuse (FWA) investigations. Discovery said the high number of black investigations is influenced by a high number of external tip-offs, representing more than 60% of all investigations in 2018. 55% of Discovery’s FWA investigations are on black health practitioners, while they only represent 37% of claims.

Discovery estimated that in the absence of effective fraud control activities, R1.7-bn of member’s money would have been lost.

The inquiry continues.