

## **Why SA has a shortage of doctors and nurses – News24 14 October 2019**

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Health Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize says the demand for health services in South Africa is increasing and funds to address the change are limited mainly due to the continuous rise of immigration and the increasing burden of disease.

Mkhize made the remarks in response to a parliamentary question from Freedom Front Plus MP Phillipus van Staden who asked him what the reasons were for the shortage of doctors and nurses in South African state hospitals.

In his response, Mkhize said: "The primary reasons why the Republic [of South Africa] has a shortage of doctors and nurses is the fact that the public health sector budget has not been increasing in real terms for the past 10 years, impacting on the number of staff that can be appointed.

"Furthermore, the demand for health services in the country is increasing while there is no additional funding to address the change, which results primarily from immigration and the increasing burden of disease.

"The shortage of health professionals is a global phenomenon and is more pronounced in low- and middle-income countries as health workers are more likely to migrate to upper-middle-income countries in search of better living and working conditions."

[City Press](#) previously reported that Mkhize's predecessor, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, claimed foreign nationals were overcrowding the local health system.

Speaking at the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union's nurses' summit in November 2018, he was quoted as saying: "The weight that foreign nationals are bringing to the country has got nothing to do with xenophobia ... it's a reality.

"Our hospitals are full, we can't control them. When a woman is pregnant and about to deliver a baby you can't turn her away from the hospital and say you are a foreign national ... you can't."

Motsoaledi continued: "And when they deliver a premature baby, you have got to keep them in hospital.

"When more and more come, you can't say the hospital is full now go away ... they have to be admitted, we have got no option - and when they get admitted in large numbers, they cause overcrowding, infection control starts failing."

Despite this, the [UCL-Lancet Commission on Migration and Health](#) says contrary to popular belief, [immigrants are not a huge burden on health care](#).

In terms of immigrants being carriers of disease, the report is emphatic: "Suspicion against migrants as carriers of disease is probably the most pervasive and powerful myth related to migration and health throughout history."

News24 previously reported that migrants and asylum seekers would have access to Gauteng's hospitals when the [National Health Insurance \(NHI\)](#) is implemented.

"Migrant access to health care will not be affected in any way, the Constitution guarantees anyone access to health care." "The NHI fund guarantees that registered migrants, asylum seekers, etc. - you will still have access," Gauteng Health MEC Bandile Masuku [told News24](#).