

LETTER Gems access to private hospitals not new – Business Day 26 November 2019

New option an extension of the benefits previously enjoyed by members

The Government Employees Medical Scheme (Gems) held a media launch in Cape Town on November 7 to announce its benefit enhancements and member contribution increases for 2020, which was attended by various media houses and stakeholders in government and the health-care sector. Had the Solidarity Research Institute's Morné Malan been in attendance, he would have received the full picture of the 2020 benefit enhancements ("[Private hospital care for public servants is hypocritical, says Solidarity](#)", November 10).

One of the announcements made at the launch was the change in name of the Sapphire option to Tanzanite One, with bigger and better benefits. This is one of the scheme's flagship and lowest-cost options for public service employees on salary levels one to five. Our Sapphire members previously had access to private hospitals, but for limited medical services such as maternity. The other benefit options always included access to private hospitals.

With Tanzanite One, members will now enjoy access to public and private hospital facilities in the Gems hospital network. This is an extension of the benefits previously enjoyed by members on Sapphire and not an entirely new benefit option.

Gems's trustees and executive committee remain committed to ensuring that SA's lowest-paid public service employees are not disadvantaged, but have access to primary health care whether from private or state facilities. Gems continues to work with the public service coordinating bargaining council to enhance member benefits.

We believe everyone has the right to primary health care and we will continue to support the principles of National Health Insurance (NHI).

We are happy to engage further with Malan on the principles of the NHI and provision of primary health-care coverage, especially to public service employees and vulnerable groups of our country.

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