

# Why we should all support the introduction of the National Health Insurance – IOL 9 December 2019

OPINION - In South Africa, we have a health system where only a minority of the population can afford private health care while the majority of the citizens don't have access to most services.

On one hand is the lack of access and poor quality in the public health system that serves about 85% of the population and on the other hand is an expensive private health sector for the remaining minority.

There are massive inequalities in the distribution of resources between the two sectors.

The Hindu Unity Movement commends the government for introducing and building a universal health system, where all the people can access the health service they need, where these services are of sufficient quality to be effective and where no one is exposed to financial hardship because of using health services.

Health care is a human right - this is a widely accepted international principle.

This right should not depend on how rich we are or where we happen to live.

The right to obtain health care is written into our Constitution.

At the moment the majority of South Africans - and the section suffering the greatest ill health does not have access to good quality health care.

Public hospital managers have very little power to make and implement decisions.

In most cases, they can only submit a request to provincial-level officials who make all the key decisions.

With the National Health Insurance (NHI), public hospital managers will be accountable and will have the authority at facility level, accompanied by mechanisms to ensure good governance.

We have the necessary skills and capacity in South Africa, and the NHI staff will undoubtedly include professionals with vast experience of public sector change management and those from the medical schemes environment.

Those screaming the loudest against the proposed NHI are often seeking to protect their own interests or privileged positions.

With the NHI, all our citizens will be provided with quality health care.

They will sleep better knowing that there will be a helping hand when they are ill and at their most vulnerable.

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