

NHI would force 40% of doctors to leave South Africa –

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SA growing number of doctors in South Africa object to the incoming National Health Insurance (NHI) system, with just under 40% planning to emigrate if a universal health-care system is implemented.

Speaking to the Cape Argus, the South African Medical Association (Sama) said the proposed changes found in the NHI bill could cause wide-scale harm to the delivery of health care if they are not managed properly, adding that the bill had been introduced at a time of deep public mistrust in the government.

A survey conducted by Sama among its members from the public and private health-care sector found that 38% of respondents said they would consider emigrating if the NHI was fully implemented.

Only 39% of doctors said they would not leave, 17% were unsure and 6% would emigrate for other reasons, the survey found.

A recent report by trade union Solidarity has also warned that the incoming National Health Insurance (NHI) will have an impact on the healthcare industry.

“The findings indicate that there is distrust towards the government regarding the way they want to implement and manage the NHI. 80% of respondents are negative or sceptical about the NHI,” said Nicolien Welthagen, a research psychologist at the Solidarity Research Institute.

Citing the results of this report, Welthagen said that the respondents do not believe the NHI will improve the healthcare system, and service delivery.

“Only 15% of respondents believe that it would be possible to successfully implement the NHI, and 84.5% are of the view that the implementation of the NHI could destabilise the healthcare system in South Africa and could harm the high-quality service already being provided by the private sector,” she said.

Welthagen added that the report further highlighted the enormous risk that the emigration of health practitioners poses to the future of healthcare in South Africa.

“There are serious concerns about a shortage of healthcare workers, the more so in view of the fact that 20.8% of the respondents indicated that they had already taken steps to emigrate, and a further 41.06% would consider emigrating when the NHI is implemented,” Welthagen said.