

Sanac CEO Sandile Buthelezi appointed as health DG

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Dr Sandile Buthelezi. Picture: SANAC

South African National Aids Council (Sanac) CEO Sandile Buthelezi has been appointed director-general of the health department, the cabinet announced on Thursday evening.

He takes the reins from Anban Pillay, who has been acting in the position for the past six months. Pillay, who is deputy director-general for National Health Insurance (NHI) stepped into the role after the sudden resignation of director-general Precious Matsoso last November, who had been in the position for almost a decade.

He joins the department at a critical time, as it seeks to manage the Covid-19 pandemic and maintain vital health services. The department is also driving major health reforms under the banner of NHI, the government's plan for universal health cover.

A medical doctor by training, Buthelezi was appointed CEO of Sanac in 2017, after working as the country director for Icap, an HIV project linked to Columbia University. He began his career employed as a doctor in various hospitals in the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal, before working for a decade as KwaZulu-Natal's head of strategic health programmes.

His past is not without controversy, as he spent five years working under former KwaZulu-Natal health MEC Peggy Nkonyeni, who persecuted doctors determined to provide HIV-positive pregnant women with medication to protect their babies from the virus.

Buthelezi is the first medical doctor to be health director-general since the departure of Ayanda Ntsaluba in 2003, who was succeeded by former teacher Thami Mseleku and pharmacist Matsoso.

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