



PRIVATE PRACTICE REVIEW

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 Private Practice Review presents the reader with a summary of the most relevant breaking news in the local and global healthcare industry, as obtained from media sources, including the public broadcaster, independent television broadcasters, independent news agencies, newspapers, radio and other media. HealthMan strives to quote the Original Source. HealthMan compiles this information to provide the reader with a brief overview of the most recent events and developments as they are reported in the media. The views and opinions expressed in Private Practice Review are those of the authors of the media sources and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of HealthMan, its directors, employees and associates.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT



**What South Africa's COVID-19 experience tells us about NHI**

"The centralised procurement of vaccines and the contracting of doctors, for example, are probably not too dissimilar from the arrangements we might see under National Health Insurance (NHI). What lessons then, if any, should we take from the COVID-19 response as we continue to debate the NHI Bill and how an NHI system might work?"

wrote Kathryn Cleary in *Spotlight* (3 March 2021)

According to Prof Alex van den Heever, chair in the field of Social Security Systems Administration and Management Studies at the Wits School of Governance, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the centralisation of power often creates a "single gatekeeper" for activities, such as distribution and procurement.

"If one has all one's eggs in one basket and you mess up - and this is what we learned from the COVID-19 experience - you mess it up for everybody," said Van den Heever.

"That's the problem with poor centralised designs - that you give too much power to a centralised structure, [and] if they fail, it fails for everybody."

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**SA 'vaccinating 10 000 people a day' but may miss targets**



A lack of transparency and bad planning on the part of the government has led SA to being at the back of C-19 vaccination allocation queues and missing vaccination targets, according to expert - *News24* (11 March 2021)

"We are not even in the Covax queue at this point because we said we aren't using AstraZeneca and that is what they are rolling out. This means Covax is out of the picture until it starts distributing other vaccines," said Alex van den Heever, chairperson of Social Security Systems Administration and Management Studies at Wits university.

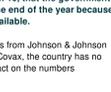
Click on the button below for link to article in *News24*

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Also read: SA may not have enough shots to achieve COVID-19 target

NEWS ON GOVERNMENT

**SA may not have enough shots to achieve COVID-19 target, warns Mkhize**



Health Minister Zwelli Mkhize told Parliament on March 10, that the government might miss its target of vaccinating 40-m people by the end of the year because there may not be enough shots available.

Although SA has secured 43-m doses of COVID-19 vaccines from Johnson & Johnson (J&J), Pfizer and the international vaccine financing facility Covax, the number has no control over potential manufacturing delays which may impact on the numbers successfully vaccinated by the end of the year.

- India and SA called on the World Trade Organisation to waive intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines - a notion fiercely rejected by pharmaceutical giants including Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson and 28 others as well as countries such as the US, the UK, Japan, Canada, Switzerland, Brazil, Norway and EU countries.



**Private sector to help state with vaccine rollout**

According to Discovery CEO Adnan Gore, there seems to be enough funding for the public and private sectors to fund the vaccine rollout as required. Gore was appointed by Health Minister Zwelli Mkhize last month to chair a vaccines acquisition task team to coordinate private sector vaccine financing, procurement, logistics and administration. A consortium of private-sector players was looking to create 50 vaccination centres that could inoculate 40 000 to 50 000 people a day and is working with the National Health Department and B4SA to finalise the collaboration.

**Limpopo health workers milked state of R2-bn**

The Sowetan recently reported that Limpopo Health has accused thousands of its health workers of milking the state of nearly R2-bn in the past two years by allegedly manipulating rosters to create the need for overtime pay. The department will now introduce new rosters in public health facilities, cut overtime and allow employees to work 40 hours a week.

**Regulate e-cigarettes, urge researchers**

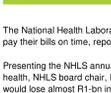
Local health researchers have urged government to urgently regulate e-cigarettes, saying they are being marketed to young people as a means to stop smoking. However, e-cigarettes don't help people to kick the habit for good. - *Independent Online* (6 March 2021)

This follows a series of recent studies conducted by the African Tobacco Industry Monitoring and Policy (ATIM), the University of Pretoria and the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC). The studies assessed local e-cigarette use, evaluated the effectiveness of e-cigarettes as cessation aids, and analysed the costs.

**DoH suspends dodgy C-19 contracts**

The DoH has suspended the services of Digital Vibes, a communications firm linked to two close associates of Health Minister Dr Zwelli Mkhize, Taberna Mather, Mkhize's long-time personal spokesperson, and Nandira Mithu, his former PA, reported *Daily Maverick* (7 March 2021). This follows an article by Pieter-Louis Myburgh in *Scorpio* (March 6) regarding a R82-m contract for C-19 awareness campaigns. The claims are being investigated by the Special Investigating Unit.

**State lab appeals to provinces to pay their bills on time**



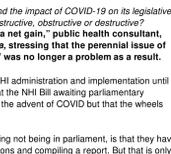
The National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS) urged provincial health departments to pay their bills on time, reported *Business Day* (10 March 2021).

Presenting the NHLS annual report for 2019/2020 to Parliament's portfolio committee on health, NHLS board chair, Eric Buch, said if levels of payment drop by 10%, the NHLS would lose almost R1-bn in income. The NHLS receives almost 90% of its revenue from provincial health departments, which it bills for tests, and cannot rely on charging higher tariffs to push up its income.

The NHLS generated a surplus of R1,082-bn for the 2019/2020 financial year and reported a cash balance of R4.1-bn. The Treasury announced in its February budget that transfers to the NHLS would shrink by an average annual rate of 12.3% between 2020/2021 and 2023/2024.

SPECIAL NEWS

**NHI systems 'pulling rabbits out of a hat' to assist with COVID**



The National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill and the impact of COVID-19 on its legislative and implementation progress - constructive, obstructive or destructive? "I would say all three but on balance a net gain," public health consultant, Dr Nicholas Crisp, told *Med Brief Africa*, stressing that the perennial issue of "getting healthcare onto the agenda" was no longer a problem as a result.

Consultant to the Department of Health on NHI administration and implementation until November last year, Crisp acknowledged that the NHI Bill awaiting parliamentary approval had been put on a backburner with the advent of COVID but that the wheels were starting to turn again.

"My understanding, and only my understanding not being in parliament, is that they have been going through and sorting the submissions and compiling a report. But that is only the beginning of that process. Then there has to be the public hearings before the Bill goes to the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), so there is still quite a lot to be done at parliamentary level which could take six months, even longer."

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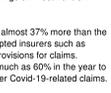


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FINANCIAL NEWS

**Momentum Metropolitan Life insurers pay heavy C-19 toll**



"SA life insurers paid out more than half-a-trillion rand in benefits of claims in 2020 as COVID-19 took a heavy toll. Claims and benefit payments to holders of life cover policies rose 6.5% to R522.7-bn in 2020, up from the previous year's R491-bn, according to long-term insurance statistics released by the Association for Savings & Investment SA (ASISA)." - *Business Day* (9 March 2021).

The life industry recorded 434 216 death claims in 2020, or almost 37% more than the 317 442 claims in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted insurers such as Momentum Metropolitan and Old Mutual to increase their provisions for claims. Old Mutual has announced that it expects profit to drop as much as 60% in the year to end-December after it had to set aside almost R4-bn to cover Covid-19-related claims.

**Diversity boosts AfroCentric's earnings**



Afrocentric Group reported an increase in its headline earnings by 10.9% to R149.5-m and headline earnings per share to 26.03 cents a share. Operating profit rose by 16.5% to R51.8-m. Chief executive Ahmed Banderker said the results show the group is reaping the rewards of its steadfast focus on diversifying its business across the spectrum, lowering costs and realising greater efficiencies, reported *Business Report* (10 March 2021).

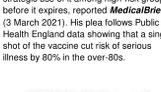
PHARMACEUTICAL NEWS

**'Don't waste AstraZeneca vaccine'**



Prof Shabir Madhi, principle investigator in the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine trial locally, has urged the DoH not to abandon the vaccine, but to make immediate strategic use of it among high-risk groups before it expires, reported *Medical Brief* (3 March 2021). His plea follows Public Health England data showing that a single-shot of the vaccine cuts risk of serious illness by 80% in the over-80s.

**Ivermectin has been legal for 30 years, due to slip-up by SAHPRA**



AfriForum and its legal team recently concluded that Ivermectin - which can be used to treat people who contracted COVID-19 - has been legal all along because the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) had failed to publish a notice in the *Government Gazette* to declare it illegal (as the Medicines and Related Substances Act 101 of 1985 requires). Moreover, SAHPRA has so far kept this fact from the public, reported *Medical Brief* (3 March 2021).

AfriForum will now amend its court application to provide for these new facts and to obtain a declaratory order that Ivermectin is a legal Schedule 3 medicine and therefore does not require registration by SAHPRA.

- On 24 February 24, *Medical Brief* (24 February 2021) reported that four out of five Ivermectin tablets tested in SA had at least one unregistered active pharmaceutical ingredient. According to a small study, published in the *SA Medical Journal*, there are "significant potential safety concerns for patients (and) consequent legal ramifications for the dispenser and/or prescribing doctor".

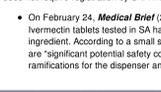
**Ivermectin 'no wonder drug' according to research**

According to the results of a recent trial among 398 adults with mild COVID-19, published in *Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA)* a five-day course of Ivermectin compared with a placebo, did not significantly improve symptoms.

"The researchers concluded that the findings don't support the use of Ivermectin for treatment of mild C-19, although larger trials may be needed to understand the effects of Ivermectin on other clinically-relevant outcomes." - *Daily Maverick* (3 March 2021)

GENERAL NEWS

**Crooks cash in on the COVID-19 pandemic**



In less than six weeks police crackdowns has led to the confiscation of almost 6-m Ivermectin tablets, "showing just how tightly this country has merged with global criminal networks cashing in on the pandemic," reported *Daily Maverick* (7 March 2021).

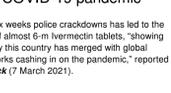
According to SAHPRA, nearly a million tablets are being pumped into SA each week, with a single tablet selling for about R500. In a statement, Interpol said in one crackdown, "some 400 ampoules - equivalent to around 2 400 doses - containing a fake vaccine were found at a warehouse in Germiston. Cautioning, where officers also recovered a large quantity of fake 3M masks and arrested three Chinese nationals and a Zambian national".

**Starb link between obesity and Covid deaths revealed**



According to the latest World Health Organisation (WHO)-backed research 9 out of 10 deaths from coronavirus occurred in countries with high obesity levels. The study from the World Obesity Federation (WOF), which represents scientists, medical professionals and researchers from more than 50 obesity associations, showed mortality rates were 10 times higher where at least 50% of the population was overweight. The latest mortality data from both Johns Hopkins University and the WHO Global Health Observatory on obesity, found that 2.2-m of the 2.5-m global deaths were in countries with high levels of obesity. Not a single example of high death rates were found in countries where less than 40% of the population was overweight.

**Business for SA calls for the elderly to get their jobs**



Business for SA (B4SA) urged the government to inoculate the elderly before essential workers to protect the most vulnerable in expectation of the next surge, which can be expected as soon as May. According to the group the government would have landed only enough vaccines to cover about 6-m people by the end of June, far short of the targets set for phase one and two.

"While the government has consistently said it has secured enough COVID-19 shots to vaccinate two-thirds of the population, or 40-m people in the next 12 months, it has yet to provide a clear line of sight on the date of arrival of these vaccines in SA," reported *Business Day* (2 March 2021).

**SA has extremely high rate of STIs**

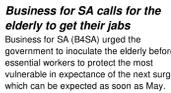
South Africa has one of the highest rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the world, including for gonorrhoea, reported *Spotlight* (1 March 2021). It is estimated that every year around two million people in the country get infected with the gonorrhoea bacterium, which is likely to be an underestimate because most women don't show any symptoms.

To read the article published in *Spotlight*, follow the link below

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Circulars from the CMS

The following Circulars were published by the CMS in March 2021.



**12 of 2021**  
 COVID-19 Financial Reporting

**15 of 2021**  
 Revised Healthcare Return Annual Statutory Return

**13 of 2021**  
 Proposed Levies for Medical Schemes 2021/22

**16 of 2021**  
 Annual Statutory Returns for the financial year ended 31 December 2020

**14 of 2021**  
 List of registered Medical Schemes for 2021

SPECIAL NOTES

**Special Post in Psychiatry available at Valkenberg Hospital**

A 5.8th specialist post in psychiatry is available immediately at Valkenberg Hospital. The post is a joint appointment of the Department of Psychiatry & Mental Health, University of Cape town and the Provincial Government of the Western Cape.

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