GENERAL NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Jab-funding plan for people without medical aids

Business and the government are working to try and finalise a funding mechanism that will enable some adults who don't have medical aid to receive their free vaccinations in private sector pharmacies, doctor's rooms, workplaces or mass vaccine sites, reported ***Business Times*** (23 May 2021). The mechanism would provide for private providers to be paid by the state to vaccinate a set number of non-medical aid patients, just as they will get paid by the medical aids to vaccinate their members.

In most countries, the state is paying to vaccinate everyone wherever they receive their doses, but SA has opted for a mix of private and public funding, with facilities charging medical aids for their members at rates set by the government.

Pharmacies and doctors have established mechanisms to charge medical-scheme administrators, but the question is how to bill the Treasury, and how many people the state will be willing, or able, to fund to be vaccinated at private facilities.

Whelan estimates the medical schemes, which will mainly be in for the more costly two-dose Pfizer vaccines, are in for a total of R3.5-bn to R4-bn to vaccinate their 7.1-m adult members.

New SA app to deliver medication

A new homegrown app, PharmaGo, was launched in March to facilitate free same-day and next-day deliveries for essential and over-the-counter medication, reported ***Financial Mail*** (15 April 2021). PharmaGo, created after two years of research by Raees Carim (a quantity surveyor), passes the customer's prescriptions, uploaded on the app, to a "pharmacy panel" available only to the pharmacist filling the prescription. This ensures information security and discretion and is exclusive to PharmaGo. Payment is via credit or debit card and is sent direct to the medical aid.

Easy-to-use oxygen device breathes new life into Covid-19 battle

A group of East London-based volunteers who include doctors, engineers and entrepreneurs, has developed a portable and easy-to-use oxygen device that can be used by less skilled healthcare workers at clinic level in the fight against COVID-19.

"Drawing inspiration from sources as diverse as scuba diving equipment and 3D printing, they built a working prototype within two weeks, and a 3D-printed final design within seven weeks. The high oxygen level delivered by the device ensures that maximum oxygen content is available to diseased lungs," reported ***TimesLIVE*** (12 January 2021).

Hundreds of the devices, called OxERAs, have already been distributed to 25 hospitals from Cape Town to Pretoria. Devices have also been distributed as far as Zimbabwe, the DRC and the Central African Republic.