



NOTICE

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 broadcasted independent television broadcasters, independent news agencies, newspapers, radio and newswires. HealthMan strives to quote the Original sources. HealthMan complies with the law 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

The NHI debate continues

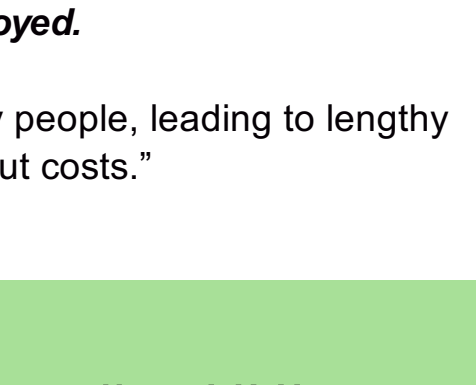
SAMA urges NCOP to think again

The SA Medical Association (SAMA) has submitted a petition to the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), imploring its lawmakers to reassess the NHI, reported *Business Day* (24 July 2023)

- "SAMA highlighted its main issues with the bill, including the potential for corruption, its inability to address shortages in human resources and infrastructure within the public health system, restrictions placed on the function of medical schemes, and the absence of a cost assessment."

"Opposition to the Bill, as shown by the petition signatures, extends beyond healthcare workers to include communities, underlining a general distrust towards the government due to its below-par record in service delivery."

"SAMA delivered a written appeal to NCOP chair Amos Masondo and a petition endorsed by over 52 000 individuals, urging MPs to reconsider the proposed legislation."

NHI will cause massive labour disruption

"Massive restructurings, like the NHI, often induce labour turbulence. Transferring health functions from provinces to a national level implies significant restructuring with potential job losses. The fate of numerous administrative staff currently at the provincial level is still to be determined. The NHI might absorb some, but past experiences suggest many may be left with uncertain futures," wrote Claire Botha in *Daily Maverick* (26 July 2023).

"Around 130 000 administrative staff employed across the provinces could face job uncertainty due to skill mismatches and the unlikelihood of the Health Department accommodating all currently employed."

"Historical records indicate that NHI will adversely affect many people, leading to lengthy labour disputes, slowing implementation, and increasing rollout costs."

Balancing choice and the public good

"NHI is not an instrument that aims to oppress the right to choose, but it rather balances choice against the principle of social solidarity within our constitutional framework," wrote Sibongiseni Dhlomo, Deputy Minister of Health, in *City Press* (16 July 2023).
 "It is why we, as proponents of the NHI, continue to protect Article 33 and others that provoke equitable distribution of resources to attain equity and secure population health. It is an evidence-based approach and inherently the right thing to do. Eradicating corruption, quality improvement and building trust must go hand in hand with ascending the NHI into law."

Decentralise NHI to curb corruption

For National Health Insurance to take a desirable shape, the powers of its functions must be decentralised to curb corruption, says Simphiwe Gada, Gauteng chairperson of the Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (Denosa). – *Times Live* (15 July 2023).
 According to the NHI Bill, a board of 11 will be appointed by and accountable to the Minister of Health.
 Gada said the nursing fraternity welcomed the Bill and is ready to implement the policy. Regarding NHI's impact on those with medical schemes, Gada said the Bill wants to bridge the gap - and not eradicate medical schemes.

[Read More](#)
Why the NHI wants your medical scheme premium

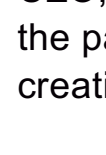
To watch the youtube video by Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism, click on the button below

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NEWS FROM GOVERNMENT

Infections claim lives of thousands of patients

"Hospital infections, mostly due to poor infection control measures, affected nearly 8 000 Gauteng patients last year, most of them at Chris Hani Baragwanath, according to Gauteng Health & Wellness MEC Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko. – *Medical Brief* (27 July 2023). Weekly and monthly Healthcare Associated Infection (HAI) surveillance records from the Department of Health revealed that Gauteng's nine regional hospitals accounted for 1 617 (22%) of all hospital-acquired infections, ranging from 138 infections at Phokong Hospital to 626 infections at Leratong hospital, more than double the next highest figure of 255 infections at the Fatima Moses Hospital."

**RAF crisis needs urgent intervention**

"Legal groups are urging SA's Transport and Justice Ministers to intervene in a 'crisis' within the Road accident Fund," reported *Times Live* (24 July 2023).

"They (the legal groups) accuse the board of causing the current dire state of the RAF through poor decision-making, such as the dismissal of a panel of 100 law firms assessing with claims in 2020 without a contingency plan. The legal consortium also criticises the fund for rejecting claims for past hospital and medical expenses from those with private medical aid, contrary to long-standing law. This decision has been legally challenged and set aside, but the RAF continues to implement."

The group proposes several solutions, including appointing a new board, a qualified CEO, experienced claim handlers, and administrative assistants as well as reintroducing the panel or staffing the state attorney's office adequately. They also recommend creating a specialist RAF court in Pretoria until the claims backlog is cleared."

**State in court to keep vaccine contracts secret**

The Department of Health went to court on 25 July in a high-stakes case in which it is pushing back against efforts by activists to force it to open its books on the secret Covid-19 vaccine contracts it signed with pharmaceutical manufacturers, reported *Business Day* (24 July 2023).

Details of the contracts with Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson (J&J) and the international vaccine-sharing mechanism Covax have never been disclosed. Critics say the power imbalance between pharmaceutical companies and a government desperate to inoculate its population meant officials agreed to erroneous conditions that could have far-reaching implications for future pandemics.

The case comes as there is fresh scrutiny of the department's Covid-19 vaccine procurement after Health Minister Joe Phaahla told Parliament that more than 22-m doses could go to waste because they will shortly expire.

The Department of Health declined to comment but said in court papers that it could not provide details of the contracts because it was bound by confidentiality clauses.

**Hospital staff paid R67-m for doing nothing**

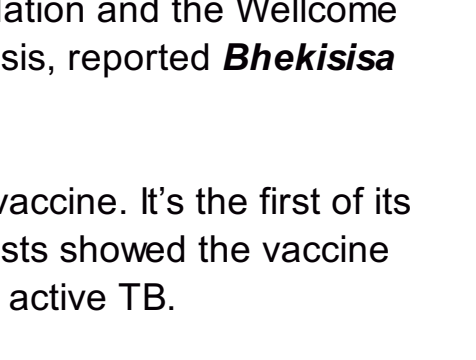
Despite the closure of an Eastern Cape TB hospital two years ago, 45 of its staff have continued to be paid a total of R67-m for doing nothing because they refused to be allocated to other facilities, and because the bankrupt Health Department has not put its foot down, reported *Medical Brief* (19 July 2023).

The Oranport Tuberculosis Hospital in Kariega (formerly Uitenhage) was shut down in 2021 after its services were rendered non-essential due to the drop in local TB cases. Patients were referred to nearby facilities, including clinics, to collect medication, while the department and labour unions reached an agreement that staff should move to other facilities of their choice. However, 45 of them refused to be re-allocated, despite advice from their unions.

According to the Eastern Cape MEC the department had undertaken a process of managing the labour dispute.

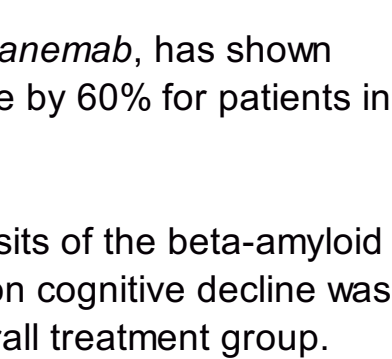


FINANCIAL NEWS

\$100-m to develop potential novel drugs

Reuters reported on 18 July that the US pharmaceutical company Pfizer and venture firm Flagship Pioneering have jointly invested a \$100-m to facilitate the development of up to 10 novel drugs in various fields, including internal medicine, cancer treatment, infectious diseases, and immunology.

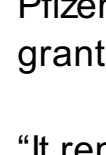
"Flagship's Pioneering Medicines division will spearhead the drug discovery drive. The agreement stipulates that Flagship-endorsed firms may receive up to \$700-m in milestones and royalties upon successfully introducing and selling any experimental treatments discovered and developed through this partnership."

R10-bn donation to boost battle against TB

A donation of over R10-bn by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Wellcome Trust may potentially lead to a new vaccine against tuberculosis, reported *Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism* (25 July 2023).

"The funds will support clinical trials for the new M72/AS01E vaccine. It's the first of its kind, showing significant potential in preventing TB. Earlier tests showed the vaccine could protect at least half of those infected from falling ill with active TB."

"Currently, the only available vaccine is the BCG, developed in 1921, which only works on children who don't have the TB germ yet."



PHARMACEUTICAL NEWS

New drug slows Alzheimer's by 60% in early-stage patients

Reuters reported on 17 July that Eli Lilly's experimental drug, donanemab, has shown promising results in slowing the progression of Alzheimer's disease by 60% for patients in the earliest stages of the disease.

Donanemab is an intravenous antibody designed to remove deposits of the beta-amyloid protein from the brains of Alzheimer's patients. The drug's effect on cognitive decline was nearly twice as effective for these patients compared with the overall treatment group. However, the results were less robust for older, later-stage patients and those with higher levels of the protein tau, which is associated with Alzheimer's progression. Side effects, include brain swelling and bleeding.

- The US Food and Drug Administration is expected to decide on donanemab's approval by the end of the paediatric year.

**Pfizer vaccine shelf life extended by six months**

Business Day reported on 20 July that the Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) has extended Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine shelf life by six months. This extension allows the Health Department a limited period to distribute over 7-m doses before they become unusable.

In June, Health Minister Joe Phaahla announced that the government held 7.48-m expired Pfizer vaccines, valued at an estimated R1.2-bn. These would be discarded unless the granted the manufacturer's request for a shelf-life extension.

"It remains uncertain whether the vaccines will be distributed exclusively in the public sector or if private healthcare providers will be re-engaged."



GENERAL NEWS

Higher STI incidence in females

"Females had a higher overall incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STI) than males nationally, except in Limpopo and the Western Cape, where STI incidence in males was 15% and 18% higher, respectively," reported *The Star* (19 July 2023).

The research was published in a recent edition of the *SA Medical Journal*, titled "Evaluation of the National Clinical Sentinel Surveillance System for STIs in SA".

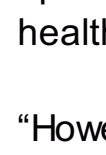
The data from all STI CSSS facilities for April 2015 to March 2020, reflects that the highest STI incidence of almost 2 000/100 000 population occurred in the 20-24 year age group. Adolescent girls and young women (15-24 years) demonstrated the highest STI incidence.

**No obesity drugs on WHO's updated list**

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) recent list of essential medicines excludes obesity drugs but includes treatments for diseases like Ebola and multiple sclerosis, reported *Reuters* (26 July 2023).

"Although a group of US academics suggested including obesity drugs, particularly those containing liraglutide, the proposal was rejected due to questionable long-term benefits and safety. However, future reconsideration may occur with more evidence."

The latest list includes naltrexone and acamprosate, used for alcohol-use disorder, and ready-to-use therapeutic food for children under five suffering from severe malnutrition. The updated list consists of 502 medicines for adults and 361 for children.



NEWS FROM MEDICAL SCHEMES

A right to exist

"While private healthcare providers are standing opposed to the NHI, the messaging isn't one of outright rejection of the concept – but rather a tactical shutting down of the government's proposed plan of action," reported *BusinessTech* (18 July 2023).

Momentum Health described the purposes of the NHI Bill as 'honourable', noting that health inequality is very drastic in South Africa. Momentum suggested that introducing affordable health insurance from the private sector would alleviate pressure on public healthcare facilities, arguing that the private sector doesn't need to be eliminated to implement the National Health Insurance (NHI) system.

As reported by **SABC**, Damian McHugh, the head of marketing for the company, believes that there are incremental steps that can be made to improve public health services, "and we think the private sector should own some of those".

According to Lee Callakoppen, the principal officer of **Bontas Medical Fund**, the second largest open medical scheme in the country, critics of the NHI often do not object to the concept of Universal Healthcare (UHC) but rather object to the inherent flaws within the bill. He said that the NHI Bill in its current form is a funding mechanism, not UHC which would actually improve access to healthcare and address the stated imbalances.

To read more, click on the button below

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Court orders CMS to provide documents

According to a court order, issued on 10 July 2022, the Council for Medical Schemes (CMS) had until 24 July to produce all the documentation and reports that led to it barring medical schemes from offering low-cost benefit options (LCBOs) to consumers.

Judge Botha also ruled in favour of the Board of Healthcare Funders (BHF) and ordered the respondents – the CMS, the Registrar of Medical Schemes, Siphoswe Kabane, and Health Minister Joe Phaahla – to pay the costs of the application.

"In the main application lodged on 8 August 2022, the BHF requested the High Court to: Lift the moratorium preventing medical schemes from providing LCBOs ... pending the finalisation of LCBO guidelines; and declare that the failure to develop and implement the LCBO guidelines is irrational, unreasonable and unlawful." - *Daily Maverick* (17 July 2023)

Affordable options

Momentum Health Solutions suggests that enabling medical schemes to offer affordable options could benefit up to 6-m low-income workers, easing the burden on the public healthcare sector, reported *Business Day* (16 July 2023).

"However, the current Medical Schemes Act's requirement to cover extensive Prescribed Minimum Benefits (PMB) makes membership unaffordable for many low-income workers. The Council for Medical Schemes has been working on a regulatory framework since 2015 to exempt schemes from these provisions, but it remains pending."

"Creating benefit sets and pricing suitable for lower-income individuals could support the state and accelerate National Health Insurance (NHI) implementation, Momentum Health Solutions' chief marketing officer, Damian McHugh.

"The frustration within the medical industry stems from the market for health insurance products being closed to new players since the implementation of demarcation regulations in April 2017."

"Health insurers have been granted exemptions, protecting them from new competitors for the past six years, while medical schemes cannot offer their low-cost benefit options."

Also Read:

Medical Brief 19 July 2023

Low-cost schemes will soften NHI tax burden, argue medical schemes



SPECIAL NOTES

Psychiatric Practice in Sandton

Busy general psychiatric practice available in Sandton Clinic as from the **1st September 2023** (Relocation due to changed personal circumstances) Please contact adviser on: **rml@global.co.za**

**General Practitioner/ Family Physician**

A well-established General Medical Practice in Central East Numbia, seeks an assistant to the view to join as a long-term associate.

- Proven qualification in Obstetrical Care, Anaesthesia, Basic Life Support, ACLS and ALS.
- Minimum 10 years' experience.
- Fluency in English and Afrikaans will be beneficial.

The practice serves a cattle & game farming community. It is located centrally in town next to a pharmacy and 10 bed private hospital with a theatre & maternity room.

Interested parties can WhatsApp Dr Francois Louw at +264 81 124 9331

Vacancy for receptionist/secretary

Paediatric Neurology Practice in Berea, Durban has a vacancy for a receptionist/secretary. Medemass knowledge and Dictaphone typing are essential.

To apply: Email CV to tonny@afrika.com

National Family Practitioners Congress

The 25th Annual National Family Practitioners will be held from **18 – 19 August at the Wanderers Club Illovo**

The theme of the conference is: **Integrating Primary Care – creating a more connected health and care system**

For more info, visit the website at: 2023 Conference – South African Academy of Family Physicians (SAAFP)

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