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 news sites. 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 The NHI debate continues

NHI not free from corruption risk **The Witness** (29 July 2023)

During the virtual launch of a report titled "Procurement and Audit Outcomes in the South African Health Sector" a discussion was held on the NHI, answering the question: Are the public procurement bill provisions enough to mitigate corruption risk? According to Russ Rensburg, Director of the Rural Health Advocacy Project (RHAP), the Zondo

processes. "So while the centralisation of purchasing of healthcare services by the NHI comes with its own risks, state capture demonstrated how excessive decentralisation of the procurement process enabled abuse by corrupt public officials.

Commission found that procurement regulations were abused to bypass competitive bidding

"Rensburg said as a Schedule 3 public entity, the proposed NHI Fund would be subject to the Public Finance Management Act. Looking at financial management trends, lack of compliance with financial management policies, particularly supply chain management policies, have resulted in deterioration of financial management indicators and an increase in the issuing of

audit opinions and qualified audits within health departments across the county.

"What we have learned in South Africa over the past 30 years is that great policies don't always result in great implementation of those policies," said Rensburg.

There are other paths to quality universal

healthcare "One striking thing about NHI in South Africa is that for all the column inches, submissions to Parliament, and oral hearings across the country and in Parliament, hardly anyone seems to have shifted their positions in the last decade, and there has been very little serious consideration of alternative paths to universal healthcare,"

wrote **Marcus Low** in **Spotlight** (3 August 2023) "One reason for this is that the NHI Bill's design choices were essentially decided on by a relatively small group of people in the National Health Department and the African National Congress (ANC) around 10 or 15 years ago. What followed since then often felt like an attempt at co-opting rather than meaningful engagement.

"Reasonable people may differ over whether the precise path set out in the current version of the NHI Bill is the right one - ultimately, only time will tell. What there should be no doubt about right now, however, is that the path the ANC has chosen for us is just one of many possible paths."

"Either way, largely for party-political reasons, it seems inevitable that South Africa will, over time, transition to a system very different from what we have now.

Prof Khama Rogo

plan.





know what to trust." "Mapato Ramokgopa of the Competition Commission emphasised the importance of implementing the 2019 Health Market Inquiry's recommendations for private healthcare. If not, systemic failures will continue. Professor Alex van den Heever from Wits University echoed his views and stated that

schemes, so some things need to be looked at before it is signed into law. That is pretty vague, but it is a vital concession, nonetheless. Yet, like much of the fog around Mashatile, it is hard to

key issues remain unresolved due to the failure to implement the recommendations. He argued

that the Health Department is hesitant to make necessary changes and wrongly assumes the National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme will supplant medical schemes. "Also, where Mashatile is dead wrong is that the issue isn't that more investment is needed. Instead, the problem is that the existing money is poorly spent, and there is zero accountability."

NHI: Treat it as an ecosystem

wrote Siyabulela Tsengiwe, former chief commissioner of the International Trade Administration Commission of SA, in City Press (13 August 2023). "What is missing are the ideological underpinnings of the conflicting policy positions of the proponents and opponents. The government has taken an egalitarian approach to UHC, while

"The DA holds that government must focus on fixing the public health sector, particularly the

governance and management of public hospitals, as a way to UHC. The SA Medical Association leadership shares a similar view. Opponents of the NHI have also warned that the public entity

"What is needed is an integrated approach in which all the interconnected parts of the health system are reformed and improved simultaneously - it is an ecosystem. Any public sector hospital contracted by the NHI must meet the norms and standards set by the Office of Health Standards Compliance."

The NHI debate tends to be dominated by what immediately strikes people's senses: the practical problems relating to how the government will administer a scheme of the magnitude of the NHI, fiscal constraints, mismanagement and corruption,

will be another failed state-owned enterprise. "To this, the leadership of the Department of Health replies that NHI could be another SA Revenue Service, the efficient revenue collector. There is no debate about the dire state of many public hospitals.

the official opposition, the DA, is motivated by classical liberalism.

AMBULANCE

To read more, click on the button below: Read More **NEWS FROM GOVERNMENT**

Gauteng Health needs to

step up emergency medical

services

Gauteng Health MEC Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko told Parliament that only 56% of urgent calls in urban areas of Gauteng receive an ambulance within 30 minutes, reported **News24** (11 August 2023). Ekurhuleni recorded the worst rate with just 46%, while Johannesburg had 52%, Tshwane 72%, Sedibeng 62%, and the West Rand 63%.

Technology solutions are being explored to resolve the problems and the Department is collaborating with law enforcement for assistance in dangerous areas. New 4x4 specialised

ambulances, Gauteng Scheduled Emergency Transport, and safety measures like panic

"The DA's Jack Bloom commented that the global standard is an 80% response within 15 minutes for top-priority calls, which the department isn't measuring. He also noted that when

city ambulances were operational, the service was better than the current system introduced by

buttons and vehicle cameras are being implemented.

the Gauteng government in 2020."

COUNCIL

FOR MEDICAL SCHEMES

barring exceptional cases."

GROUP

savings of R241 per member."

and private sectors."

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ADVERTORIAL - PSG

Considering a university

education for your child

Violent attacks prompt special training for staff

Medical Brief reported on 3 August that the Gauteng Department of Health has announced new plans to tackle security lapses. This follows the latest reports of violence against staff – doctors, nurses, paramedics – and patients, at government hospitals and clinics in South

Africa. The violence include staff who have been bitten, punched, robbed, assaulted, or killed.

"The department's announcement prompted questions by organised labour and an opposition politician about whether the authorities have lost trust in the multi-million rand security measures already in place to protect both personnel and patients, with some arguing that security guards, rather than healthcare workers, should be responsible for safety. "The training plans, however, have inspired little confidence among healthcare workers," wrote Thabo Molelekwa for Spotlight.

CMS recommends limiting

medical scheme premium

increases

with the inflation rate of 5% as predicted by the Reserve Bank,

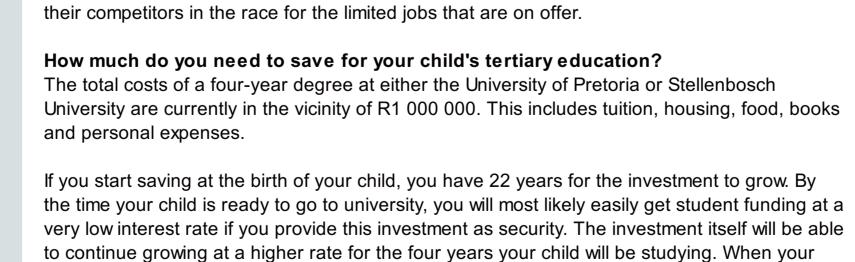
OPSG

The Council for Medical Schemes (CMS) advised medical schemes to keep their 2024 contribution increases aligned

reported **Business Day** (10 August 2023)

"The regulator warned that any hikes surpassing the inflation rate could exacerbate the financial burden on households, potentially making scheme membership too costly for existing beneficiaries." Ryan Noach, CEO of Discovery Health, predicted that medical inflation in SA is expected to remain 3-5 percentage points above the CPI, and the contribution increases are likely to align with this range to ensure contributions match claims.

"The CMS also announced schemes could no longer postpone contribution hikes past January,



child is 22, the total debt would be R3 600 000 based on inflation of 6% p.a. until then

To read the article, click on the button below:

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In a world where more young people are unemployed than employed, it has never been more important to ensure our children's future. Ultimately, you want to empower them to rise above

FINANCIAL NEWS Al saves healthcare group billions **AfroCentric**

- **Business Day** (10 August 2023) "AfroCentric, owner of Medscheme, delivers private and public healthcare solutions and process approximately 12.5-m claim lines monthly, with over 99% processed solely by Al without human intervention. This Al usage also addresses fraud and abuse, saving their scheme clients an impressive R150m annually.

Netcare CEO announces early

"The group has saved their medical scheme clients a remarkable R4.6-bn by analysing consumption patterns and health service utilisation. This equates to an average monthly

AfroCentric, has reduced its administration costs by billions by integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into its business operations, according to Vukosi Sambo, AfroCentric's head of data and insights.

NET CARE retirement Netcare CEO Dr Richard Friedland announced his early retirement after 30 years, including 18 as CEO. "During Friedland's tenure, Netcare built five new flagship hospitals and founded new business units such as Netcare 911. It also focused on the digitisation of healthcare, which includes

expected to be completed in April 2024." - (*Business Day* 31 July 2023)

PHARMACEUTICAL NEWS

Additional hike in

electronic patient records, scripts, blood and other pathology test results and radiology results,

"In May, Friedland sounded a stark warning about SA's nursing shortage, saying the crisis is damaging the company's growth prospects and threatening healthcare provision in the public

price of pharmaceuticals Health Minister Joe Phaahla has agreed to an additional hike of 1.73% in private sector pharmaceutical prices for the year,

Last year an increase of only 3.28% was declared. However, it falls short of entirely

"Generic drug manufacturer Cipla said the second price increase was welcome but was

insufficient to offset inflation. Cipla SA CEO, Paul Miller, said that the combined annual price

increase of 4% does not cover the rising costs of operating in the pharmaceutical sector, given

counteracting inflation, which hovered around 6% in the first half of this year.

they hoped for, it was, at least, some relief.

that inflation is above 5%.

scientific research".

treatment of diseases such as cancer."

reported **Business Day** (1 August 2023).

Stavros Nicolaou, Chair of the Pharmaceutical Task Group (PTG), said although it wasn't what

GENERAL NEWS Covid-19: Gray steps down as president of SAMRC

News24 reported on 1 August that Prof Glenda Gray has stepped down as the president and CEO of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), where she served for two terms.

The SAMRC said Gray, "alongside an exceptional senior executive team, had achieved

significant milestones, including five consecutive clean audits, transformative grant funding

initiatives that have greatly improved support for young scientists, black African scientists, and women, as well as the establishment of vital collaborations and partnerships that will advance

Prof Gray will now focus on HIV vaccine research and other areas of vaccinology to develop

Life Healthcare Group acquires

non-clinical operations

The Star reported on 10 August that Life Healthcare has acquired the non-clinical operations of TheraMed Nuclear Benoni.

new vaccines that address pressing health challenges in Africa.

"The purchase of TheraMed Nuclear forms part of the Life Healthcare Group's broader South African diagnostics strategy, which includes diagnostic imaging and nuclear medicine. "Life Healthcare South Africa CEO Adam Pyle said that the acquisition of the non-clinical operations means that Life Healthcare now owns and manages the infrastructure and equipment and employs the radiographers and support staff.

"Nuclear physicians and radiologists continue to provide clinical services in their independent

"Collaboration between the public and private sectors will be essential when assessing the operational rollout of National Health Insurance (NHI) and related funding models," wrote **Damian McHugh**, executive head of marketing at Momentum Health Solutions, in Business Times (6 August 2023).

capacities. This technology can support clinicians with more accurate management and

NEWS FROM MEDICAL SCHEMES

Innovative solutions can help

make NHI work

demand for private-sector healthcare professionals.

Moneyweb reported on 2 August that Discovery Health has

appealed the dismissal by the Pretoria High Court of its application to compel the Road Accident Fund (RAF) to

developed by BankservAfrica show that the average nominal take-home pay in May 2023 was R14 457, "If we add 6-m employed people to affordable health insurance products at much lower premiums, they would enjoy day-to-day medical benefits, emergency and accident cover and other benefits. We would potentially move an average of 15 000 people per hospital from the public to the private healthcare sector. In turn, if we can tackle our jobless rate and bring more people into formal employment, we can further shift the burden from the state and create

"This incremental approach would allow us to improve access to public-sector health facilities, retain skills across the public and private sectors and, importantly, build a collaborative relationship with the government rather than further entrenching ideological positions."

Discovery's feud with RAF continues

There are 6-m employed people not covered by private-sector medical schemes. Data

Health Insurance more palatable. "It has been more than seven years since the council began to develop a legal framework to enable medical schemes to offer low-cost benefit options exempt from providing the full, costly suite of benefits stipulated by law." MEDSHIELD Medshield loses members In the year to 31 December 2022, Medshield Medical Scheme saw a decline in member

Moneyweb (14 August 2023).

SPECIAL NOTES

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338 in 2022.

shedding, inflation, and higher interest rates weighed on consumers' spending power, reported

"The scheme lost more than 6 000 beneficiary members, dropping from 149 513 in 2021 to 143

"The scheme's principal officer Kevin Aron said economic difficulties marked the 2022 year. He cited the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which were exacerbated by other medical diseases and conditions, including mental health issues. In addition, he said, South Africa experienced economic challenges compounded by the increase in fuel prices and interest rates, coupled

and benefits changes for 2024 expenditure **Circular 28 of 2023: Circular 30 of 2023:** Imposition of approved levies for IAS1 impact on ISA700 auditor report template Medical Schemes 2023/24

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

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 tonyy@iafrica.com

National Family Practitioners Congress

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

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immediately resume processing of claims and payments to medical scheme claimants. The appeal was lodged after the Road court declared unlawful an RAF directive stating that the fund Accident should not pay claimants whose medical aid scheme had already paid for their medical expenses from a road **Fund** accident. According to Discovery Health CEO, Dr Ryan Noach, the RAF had not resumed claims processing for medical scheme members, despite the court ruling the RAF directive unlawful. To read more, click on the button below: Read More BHF turns up the legal heat on CMS and Minister Business Day reported on 8 August that the Board of Healthcare Funders (BHF) is expected to argue in the Pretoria High Court that the Council for Medical Schemes (CMS) and Health Minister Joe Phaahla should face possible jail time for defying a court order to produce documents related to low-cost benefit options. The BHF alleges that the CMS and the Minister failed to comply with a July High Court order it obtained for a record explaining the continued blocking of the introduction of low-cost benefit options. The BHF believes the regulator is blocking low-cost benefit options to make National numbers to 71 917, losing more than 2 280 principal members as the impact of increased load

with the impact of the rolling blackouts affecting member affordability and placing strain on the retention of members." **CIRCULARS FROM THE CMS** New circulars published by the CMS in July and August 2023: **Circular 27 of 2023: Circular 29 of 2023:** Guidance on contribution increases IFRS17 - Direct attributable

General Practitioner/ Family Physician A well-established General Medical Practice Central East Namibia, seeks an assistant with the view to join as a long-term associate. Proven qualification in Obstetrical Anaesthesia, Basic Life Support, ACLS and PALS • Minimum 10 years' experience. • Fluency in English and Afrikaans will

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)