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PRIVATE PRACTICE REVIEW

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

'Many ways to improve our healthcare system'

Marcus Low wrote in Spotlight (23 October 2023): "Rather than asking public sector patients to pay more for healthcare, it would be better to make the most of the good public sector users the option of getting their back surgeries done by the TB, hypertension, and diabetes days at private sector pharmacies along the lines of Dischem's Healthy Life Centres, Dr Ntsaluba said.

Tackle most notably, many public sector patients can collect their chronic medicines at private pharmacies or other pickup points. Though still a work in progress, the evolution of the Dischem Healthy Life Centres demonstrates how this could work, and that the NHI bill makes helping more accessible and convenient for users.

"There are many possible ways to reform and improve our healthcare system. Some will be effective, and some won't. Either way, it would be foolish to simply turn our backs and pretend they are not there."

Funds to pay for NHI 'will destroy the economy'

With an estimated R200bn plus needed to fund the National Health Insurance, experts say that, expecting taxpayers to cough up the money, would have a massive dent in their disposable income and 'destroy the economy'.

Tanya Tavan, retirement specialist at Tax Consulting SA, has calculated that for a family of four, the tax would amount to R1 225 a month or R14 700 per annum, a family earning R1 million per annum would have to pay R100 000 in addition to the NHI annually. - The Citizen (11 Nov 2023)

"Individual net take-home pay would decrease by R244 per month or R4 368 per year. Medical aid members would be paying for healthcare twice, and would receive a reduction across all income levels and tax brackets. Lower income earners would only afford basic medical aid or hospital plan would feel the pinch the hardest.

"Middle income earners would be forced to downgrade medical aid plans and pay more out-of-pocket for healthcare and consider dropping medical aid altogether. Higher income earners would be downgrading plans further or even cancelling membership due to financial constraints."

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Per South Africa's health, we must get NHI right

Also Read

Medico-legal claims may pose a risk to NHI, says AG

The Auditor General's (AG) office has cautioned Parliament that the government's ongoing failure to control medical malpractice claims poses a risk to its (NH) plans, reported **Business Day** (7 Nov 2023).

In the 2022/2023 financial year, provincial health departments received a record high number of claims, at a cost of R18-billion.

According to Mihlali Tshaw, a senior manager at the AG's office, other health sector challenges include staff shortages, inefficient healthcare facilities, and the lack of policy and legislative frameworks to deal with medical malpractice. The AG's recommendations impact on the sector's ability to provide efficient, high-quality healthcare services, which could jeopardise the essential foundations of the NHI, said Tshaw.

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Too many SA children are victims of malnutrition

A report, released by the SA Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) revealed that a over million of children were succumbing to severe acute malnutrition across the republic, reported **Sowetan** (7 Nov 2023).

The preventable deaths of children are a serious endement on a country that has extensive levels of wealth and whose citizens daily flaunt their opulence. It is an indictment of a government and governing party that trumpets the philosophy of a caring government, said SAHRC commissioner Chris Mutangadura.

The SAHRC has made some recommendations to address the issue, including the **enforcing government that with the 5% dice state of the Focus on a cheaper for during nothing. The cheaper should be, in fact, the caring South Africans, to stop the.**

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NEWS FROM GOVERNMENT

Treasury to buffer front-line services

Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana made no mention of additional funding for the National Health Insurance (NHI) in his Medium Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) on Wednesday

reported **Medical Brief** (2 Nov 2023).

Business Day reported on 1 November that Treasury has allocated an additional R3bn in the coming financial year to ease the pressure on provincial budgets for services, including health, education and the police service.

"Treasury has set aside a revised estimate of R200-bn for health in 2023, rising to R208-bn in 2024/25. The consolidated health budget has increased to R377-bn in 2023/24.

According to Treasury, maintaining service delivery and budget constraints would require health to improve efficiency in areas such as overtime payments, medical supplies and security services and deep infrastructure projects.

Day Zero for three of Western Cape's academic hospitals

Three of the Western Cape's academic hospitals have hospitals earmarked Red, because of severe funding cuts, they could run out of cash by 15 January 2024.

A national budget shortfall of at least R21bn has forced the Western Cape's three tertiary hospitals into a situation that potentially catastrophic service delivery, reported **Daily Maverick** (3 Nov 2023).

The shortfall for Tygerberg Hospital is R10bn, for Groote Schuur Hospital R3bn and for the Cape Town Mental Children's Hospital R21m. The Western CEOs of these hospitals sent a memorandum to departmental heads.

Treasury promises plug R10bn due to nurses' negligence
According to medical and dental registrars in SA, senior Treasury officials have promised to plug a R10-billion budget shortfall that has left three Western Cape hospitals with only days before they run out of cash, reported **Daily Maverick** (3 Nov 2023). - **Phumzile Mbanjwa** wrote in the article.

HIV/AIDS budget cut by R140bn

Treasury has cut R140-billion from the HIV/AIDS budget over the next seven years as it re-assesses its priorities in order to cover tax revenue, higher borrowing costs, and higher wages for public sector workers, Minister Enoch Godongwana reported.

Moneyweb (2 November 2023).

Concern about rapidly issued tender for cancer treatment

Moneyweb reported on 1 Nov that the Gauteng Department of Health has sparked concerns by rapidly issuing and closing a tender for outsourcing oncology services, which could see the private sector taking over the provision of cancer tender, which aims to address a backlog of 1 000 patients currently waiting for treatment. The tender was issued on 10 October and closed on 24 October, with a short time frame and a compulsory briefing session just a week after the tender was issued, some also criticised.

FINANCIAL NEWS

Dis-Chem plans a one-stop-shop for healthcare

Business Times reported on 1 November 2023 that Dis-Chem is transitioning its brand from being solely a pharmacy retailer to a comprehensive healthcare provider, with plans to offer a wide range of services, from telemedicine, medical insurance and medical aid gap cover.

According to CEO, Rui Morais, Dis-Chem plans to open 100 new stores within the next three years, with the aim of becoming a one-stop-shop for healthcare, with the inclusion of other products within their stores. Their stronghold is primarily in Gauteng, and they aim to replicate this success nationwide by opening more outlets.

TB drug price drop by 40%

Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) announced on 1 November that it has secured a 40% price reduction for the TB medicine bedaquiline, a key component in MDR-TB treatment, will drop by 40%.

This follows an announcement by the manufacturer, Johnson & Johnson (J&J), that it would not enforce its patent in 91 low- and middle-income countries, ensuring access to more affordable generic versions for 134 lower- and middle-income countries.

Global wellness industry now worth $5.6 trillion

According to a report from the Global Wellness Institute, the global wellness industry is now worth $5.6 trillion, up from $4.5 trillion in 2020. - **Bloomberg** (13 November 2023).

The global wellness industry is expected to grow by 17% to $6.5 trillion by 2027.

The wellness market is larger than before the Covid-19 pandemic, with several broad categories of businesses falling under the wellness umbrella, including personal care and beauty, healthy eating, healthy lifestyle, fitness and mindfulness, and wellness tourism.

Luxury hotels and hospitality companies are also capitalising on the wellness trend to attract customers.

PHARMACEUTICAL NEWS

Government plans to prevent stockouts

Spotlight reported on 1 Nov 2023 that medicine stockouts continue, despite the SA government's electronic surveillance systems like Ecletician and Stock Visibility to prevent stockouts at public healthcare facilities, reported.

"These systems allow healthcare workers to track and monitor medicine levels, generate reports, and advise on ordering to prevent shortages or overstocking.

"According to healthcare workers and managers, having access to real-time drug stocks has allowed them to be more prepared in managing supplies. However, infrastructure challenges, such as the lack of internet access, and the pharmaceutical supply chain's security contribute to ongoing shortages.

To address the international stockout issue, experts suggest reducing overreliance on international suppliers by boosting local production, forming trade suppliers for vital medicines to reduce vulnerability in the supply chain.

GENERAL NEWS

First whole-eye, partial-face transplant

The world's first whole-eye replacement and partial-face transplant has been performed on a 46-year-old man who had his eyes and face burned by acid. Surgery is a high-voltage electrical accident.

reported **CNN News** on 2 Nov 2023.

To watch the video, click on the button below

Watch the Video

'SA's private healthcare system lures expats back'

South Africans who had previously emigrated in search of better opportunities are returning to their home country to access its outstanding private healthcare system, said Discovery CEO Adrian Gore at a Time Tech presented by PSG Conference (Nov 2023).

Gore said, "Expressed concerns about the potential consequences of the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill to its current form, emphasising the academics of SA's private healthcare systems, the quality of medical professionals, care, and the overall standard.

"In its recent annual report, Discovery identified the implementation of the NHI in its current form as a significant threat to its business. The company's CEO also highlighted arriving crime and accessing concerns about South Africa's energy constraints.

Growing number of 'bogus doctors'

"Over the past three years, 124 fake medical doctors have been arrested in the country as a result of a campaign by the Non-Profit Organisations Council of South Africa (NPO) to root out bogus doctors.

According to Thabo Nethenja, a senior medical malpractice underwriter at First Guardian Risks, "In addition to prevalent criminal charges, there were serious ramifications for medical practitioners who were involved in such activities. These individuals could face reprimands, revoked hefty penalties or a medical practitioner who is unaware of the impact of such professional but potential to be at".

He said that the public could protect itself by verifying their credentials on the HPCSA's website and the public to a complaint medical professional.

NEWS FROM MEDICAL SCHEMES

Discovery goes after RAF for contempt of court

Discovery Health plans to launch contempt of court proceedings against the Road Accident Fund (RAF) for failing to implement a court order to pay out "in full and speedily" claims in terms of the RAF's mandate.

reported **Moneyweb** (7 Nov 2023).

Discovery Health CEO Ryan Noach said, despite the clear position of the court, declaring the RAF's directive to halt payments of medical scheme members' claims claims from the 1st of July 2023 to be unconstitutional and invalid, Discovery Health.

The CMS initially instructed the companies to stop selling their products, resulting in 200F that it believed they were doing the business of a medical scheme without being registered as a medical scheme. The CMS also issued a directive to Discovery Health, saying that prepaid vouchers offer from medical schemes, which put the risk of future healthcare expenses among other medical costs on the medical scheme.

Discovery Health's CEO, Ryan Noach, said the Council for Medical Schemes (CMS) failed to recognise that its decision to deem the business of a medical scheme and to interdict them from selling their vouchers.

CareConnect links patient records
Medical Scheme Administrator, Medscheme, has partnered with health technology solutions, CareConnect, to provide a digital platform for medical scheme members.
**Guiding partners include medical scheme administrators Discovery Health, Medscheme, Momentum Health Solutions, Bonitas, Medshield, Medipos, Medihealth, Medwise, Medsphere, Medshield, Medshield, Medscheme, Medscheme, Medscheme