



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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Wrangling over NHI has resulted in another fine mess
SA's perpetual wrangling over policy orientation, passive austerity, political campaigning and practical realities have yet again been thrust to the fore in the current healthcare debate.
wrote Khaya Sithole (accountant, academic and activist), in Business Day (8 February 2024).
The Government's commitment to rolling out its National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme has escalated tensions between the state, the healthcare industry and big business. Regrettably, like many large-scale, critical public initiatives, the system has not been spared the challenges that undermine its intentions.
They include resource constraints affecting the ability to hire healthcare practitioners to ensure the range of healthcare needs of citizens; clinical accidents and errors that lead to medical negligence claims of billions of rand across the different provinces; and gross corruption uncovered during the Covid-19 pandemic.
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Government's poor decisions are hurting patients
The vision of a universal, accessible, high-quality, and comprehensive health system under the NHI will remain unattainable without addressing the deficiencies within the public health system, wrote Bernard Mutsago and Hasena Majid in Spotlight (9 Feb 2024).
For the NHI policy to succeed, it requires collaboration beyond political circles, incorporating feedback from all sectors, including health professionals and civil society. A well-structured public-private partnership model, effective monitoring, and an inclusive data collection system are critical for creating a responsive rather than reactive health system. Moreover, enhancing community involvement in healthcare decision-making is vital for building a health system that provides equitable access to all.
In its Editorial on 8 February, Business Day commented:
This week's open letter from healthcare professionals appealing to Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana to reverse the budget cuts to health is a well-timed reminder that society's poorest and most vulnerable citizens always pay the price for Government's bad decisions.
In the letter, addressed to Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana, senior clinicians from Cape Town's top public hospitals, supported by more than a thousand signatories, noted the harm done to patients in cold detail as the Western Cape Health Department has been forced to implement a hiring freeze in response to the budget crisis.
Their letter comes hard on the heels of Health Minister Joe Phaahla's frank admission that the government doesn't have enough money to employ all the doctors it needs to meet patients' needs.
While staff in provinces may not be speaking out publicly, there is no question that the scenario sketched by clinicians in the Western Cape is playing out across the country.
Treasury would do well to remember that no nation can thrive without healthy citizens.

Waive the NHI Bill, urges BUSA
Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) requested Pres. Cyril Ramaphosa to send the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill back to Parliament for further review and modification, citing significant concerns over its potential negative impact on the nation's healthcare infrastructure, reported Business Day on 4 February.
BUSA and its affiliate, Business for SA (B4SA), raised doubts about the Bill's compliance with constitutional demands and noted that feedback from the business sector and other groups had been overlooked.
News24 reported on 6 February that Western Cape expressed significant reservations about the enactment of the NHI Bill due to concerns over the Bill's clarity and potential implications for the health system.
With no response from the President, the province has reiterated its readiness to contest the NHI Bill legally if necessary.
Solidarity ready for first 2024 court case
In Solidarity's first 2024 court case regarding the NHI Bill, the union will be asking the High Court to review a decision by the Department of Health to advertise and fill senior posts before the system is being approved by Parliament. - Politicsweb (6 Feb 2024).
According to Anton van der Bijl, Solidarity's deputy chief executive for legal matters, the advertising of the jobs in August 2022 was illegal in itself.
By having done this, the Government has shown just how much it wants to strengthen the NHI through without heeding its consequences - or heeding people's strong opposition against it.
We are also going to challenge the constitutionality of the Certificate of Need by which medical practitioners may be told where they may practise in terms of the NHI. This is yet another major step in the battle and we already have a court date for it. Eventually, we are going to challenge the NHI Act in its entirety in court, said Solidarity Chief Executive, Dr Dirk Hermann.

Unemployed doctors lash out at government
Almost 1 000 young doctors 1 000 unemployed
The doctors blame Government of poor financial management rather than a lack of funds.
The South African Medical Association Trade Union (SAMATU) criticised Government's prioritisation of health within public services.
The Health and Allied Workers Indaba Trade Union (HAIWU) condemned Government's economic policies - including austerity measures and reduced public spending - as contributors to the healthcare system's decline.
The union also demands that public officials be ordered to use public healthcare services to bridge the disconnection between politicians' healthcare choices and the public system's realities.
Money found to hire unemployed doctors
On 13 February, during the Parliamentary debate on President Cyril Ramaphosa's State of the Nation address, Health Minister Joe Phaahla reassured unemployed doctors that Government has secured funding to employ them, with specific details to be disclosed in the Finance Minister's budget speech next week. - Business Day (14 Feb 2024).
Phaahla said the Health Department is collaborating with the National Treasury to finalise the specifics and is also coordinating with provincial health departments to expedite the process so that all those without positions can commence by April 1.

Minimum wage increased by 8,5%
On 1 February 2024, the Minister of Employment and Labour announced that, effective on 1 March 2024, the National Minimum Wage will be increased by 8,5% to R27,58 per hour. This follows the report by the National Minimum Wage (NMW) Commission published in the Government Gazette (Feb 2024).
Three proposals tabled in the report are as follows:
The majority recommendation is the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 3%
Eight of the 12 commissioners propose that the national minimum wage increase by CPI plus 3%
The recommendation by the Business Constituency is only CPI; and
The recommendation by an independent expert is CPI plus 0.75%.

Pharmaceutical News
These proteins may predict dementia
Reuters reported on 12 February that a study, published in Nature Aging, has uncovered numerous proteins in frozen blood samples that could be potential early indicators of various dementia types a decade before diagnosis.
The investigation analysed 52 645 blood samples from the UK Biobank, collected between 2006 and 2010, from individuals without dementia symptoms. Out of these subjects, 1 417 eventually developed Alzheimer's, vascular dementia, or other forms of the condition.
The study identified 1 463 proteins linked with dementia and rated them by their predictive potential. Higher levels of specific proteins in the blood were consistent markers for the later development of Alzheimer's and other dementias.
Supply of cholera vaccine stocks depleted
Two United Nations agencies reported that the global emergency supply of cholera vaccines had been depleted. - Reuters (14 Feb 2024).
According to a UNICEF official, there is a projected deficit of at least 50m doses for the remainder of the year due to the increasing number of cases worldwide.
In January alone, the WHO reported 40 900 cases and 775 deaths across 17 countries in its latest update on the global cholera situation.
Also Read: 'Cholera on the rise in Africa' (General News)

General News
Treatment obstacles are causing 'needless deaths'
According to the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) the scarcity of diagnostic and radiation equipment, particularly in public hospitals, as well as the frequent unavailability of cancer drugs, contributed to the increase in cancer patients from about 62 000 in 2019 to an expected 121 000 by 2030. - TimesLive 5 Feb 2024
The report calls for urgent attention to gender and racial equity to improve cancer outcomes, suggesting early screening programmes, stringent regulation of carcinogenic products, and enhanced cancer care strategies as pivotal measures.
Cholera on the rise in Africa
Change attitude to care for these patients
The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) reported that, since the beginning of the year, over 20,000 cholera cases have been recorded in 12 African nations, including Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, and Malawi. - Times Live (6 February 2022).
South Africa identified 46 potential cholera cases and five confirmed by laboratory tests since 1 January. Health Minister Joe Phaahla said that Limpopo hospitals diagnosed four confirmed cases. A fifth case was identified at Gauteng's Helen Joseph Hospital.
The tragic deaths of 144 mental health patients at Life Esidimeni (2016) in Gauteng was a symptom of a deeper malaise that afflicts the state's attitude and approach to the care of people with disabilities. - Editorial Comment, Business Day (9 Feb 2024). In another scandal in Mpumalanga, an NGO called Sunfield Home Fortuna, used patients as pawns in a subsidies dispute with the provincial social development department. An investigation indicated that the NGO was not competent or qualified to provide the necessary care for these patients.

Peanut butter withdrawn over toxin fears
More peanut butter brands have been withdrawn from sale at Pick n Pay, alongside those sold at Dischem, Clicks, FNB and Nature and other health shops. - Business Maverick (14 Feb 2024). They include Dischem's Lifestyle 400g Smooth and Crunchy, Dischem's Lifestyle 800g Smooth and Crunchy, Wazoogle's Superfoods (all sizes), Pick'n Pay's No Name 1kg smooth and Eden All Natural.

News from Medical Schemes
Discovery's cancer payouts jumped almost 20% last year
According to recent data from Discovery Health Medical Scheme (DHMS), there has been a nearly 19% increase in cancer treatment and maintenance allocation, with over R3.2bn spent in the past year, reported News24 (7 Feb 2024).
DHMS reported a 2.7% rise in breast cancer diagnoses among its members; cervical cancer diagnoses saw a 1% increase; and prostate cancer diagnoses grew by 8.6%.
Don't cancel your medical scheme
There is a host of different elements that the Government will have to address and basically ensure that they will put in place before any change can take place to the private healthcare.
says Gary Feldman, executive head of Healthcare Consulting at NMG Benefits.
Read the interview in Moneyweb (13 February 2024)

CMS Circulars
Circulars published by the CMS in February 2024
Circular 2 of 2024: Adjustment on fees payable to brokers
Circular 3 of 2024: Induction programmes for Trustees

Special Notes
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