



FOR PROFESSIONALS
SINCE 1941

LOCAL DOCTORS' CONFIDENCE IN FUTURE OF SA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM DECLINES - SURVEY

08 April 2015: Medical doctors are losing confidence in the future of the healthcare system as well as in the future of their profession in South Africa, according to the results of a recent PPS survey of over 500 medical doctors.

The last quarter 2014 survey revealed a confidence level of 43% in the future of the healthcare system in South Africa over the next five years, down three percentage points from the previous quarter. In addition, when asked about their confidence in the future of their profession over the next five years, a confidence level of 67% was recorded – the lowest confidence level recorded for this question since the inception of the survey in 2012.

Commenting on the results, Dr Mark Sonderup, Vice-Chairman of the South African Medical Association (SAMA), says that doctors in both the public and private sector face significant challenges that continue to erode morale and confidence. “The recent issues around excessive medicolegal claims and the massive increases in indemnity insurance is but one example.”

Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi recently stated that the rise in medical malpractice claims has reached crisis levels and is pushing medical practitioners to avoid practising certain medical specialities including gynaecology, neurosurgery, anaesthesiology and neonatology. The minister revealed that the cost of indemnity insurance for private specialists in neurosurgery has increased by 573% while claims related to obstetrics rose by 400% between 2007 and 2014.

Macy Seperepere, Manager: Professional Associations at PPS, says the results of the survey are concerning considering the shortage of skilled medical professionals in the country. “It is vital that these skills are retained in South Africa otherwise the country faces a potentially dire situation, where the critical skills needed to meet our medical needs will simply not be available.”

The survey also revealed a concern amongst doctors about the current standard of nursing skills in the country. When respondents were asked what the biggest problem facing South African doctors was, a significant 27% said the current standard of nursing skills, followed by staffing levels (24%), ageing infrastructure (21%), lack of medical supplies (14%) and insufficient training (14%).

Dr Sonderup says the country not only faces a significant nursing shortage, but a critical shortage of skilled nurses such as Critical Care trained nurses as well as other specialist type nurses.

“To address this, much more needs to be done to promote the nursing profession as well as to ensure the adequate training of nursing professionals,” highlights Dr Sonderup.

When respondents were asked whether they have started taking the necessary steps to ensure ease of integration into the new National Health Insurance (NHI) model once it is implemented, 81% said no.

Dr Sonderup attributes these results to the vacuum that continues to exist around definitive information on the planned NHI. "To date we have the green paper released in 2010. There is nothing more following that and we are still awaiting the white paper; so in essence the NHI plan requires more concrete details."

Seperepere says that the results of the survey point to various concerns among medical professionals that could negatively impact the future of the profession and healthcare system if they remain unaddressed. "In order to not only retain but to also attract new entrants to the profession, it is important that doctors feel their valid concerns are being listened too and addressed.