



FOR PROFESSIONALS

SINCE 1941



SA MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS UNCONVINCED BY NHI PROPOSAL

South Africa's medical professionals remain unconvinced about the implementation of Government's National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme, despite the majority believing that some form of universal healthcare coverage is required.

A quarterly survey of nearly 1 000 medical professionals conducted by PPS showed that 60% of respondents said they agreed with the principles behind NHI. However, only 15% said they believe that the current solution being proposed is the correct solution to fix the country's ailing healthcare system.

According to Gerhard Joubert, Head of Group Marketing and Stakeholder Relations at PPS, the financial services provider focused on graduate professionals, part of the concern regarding the introduction of NHI is the lack of clarity over how the system will work.

"There are still a lot of unanswered questions regarding NHI and how the system will be funded, as well as how the government plans to address the dire condition of many state facilities, so part of the concern from the medical sector is no doubt due to the uncertainty."

He says the proposal put forward by the Health Minister to open an Academy for Leadership and Management in Health Care in Pretoria to train various management levels within the public health system is already a good indication of how Government plans to address the current issues within the public sector.

Joubert also notes that National Treasury has announced plans to publish its discussion document on financing options for the NHI before the Budget in February next year. "While the proposal will still be at the discussion stage, this will provide far more clarity for both the medical sector and for consumers who will ultimately be funding the system whether through a payroll tax, higher value-added tax, or a surcharge on income tax."

The survey also revealed that medical professionals are also concerned about how NHI will impact on their ability to earn a salary. Respondents had a confidence level of 52% on whether their prospects of earning a sufficient income if NHI is implemented, down 1 percentage point on the previous three months.

Furthermore, respondents had a confidence level of 62% on whether a pricing commission where all role players - healthcare providers, private hospitals and medical schemes - can negotiate and set tariffs, is a positive solution, down 3 percentage points on the previous quarter.

Other findings from the survey revealed that medical professionals are losing confidence in the future of their profession over the next five years, with a score of 70%, down 3 percentage points from the previous three months.

Confidence also fell on a number of other key metrics including the economic outlook for South Africa over the next 12 months, which fell 5 percentage points to 54%; the outlook for the local equity markets over the next 12 months fell 3 percentage points to 59%; and confidence that we have seen the worst of the global economic turmoil fell 1 percentage point to 49%.

“South Africa’s medical professionals clearly support the idea of providing quality healthcare to the whole of society – but it is crucial that Government not only addresses the concerns among this segment but also seeks to engage properly with the private sector to ensure complete buy-in from all stakeholders,” concludes Joubert.