



FOR PROFESSIONALS

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SA PHARMACISTS SUPPORT GREATER PUBLIC-PRIVATE COLLABORATION - SURVEY

Confidence in the state of the healthcare system in South Africa is continuing to improve among the country's pharmacists, according to the results of a new survey conducted by PPS. This follows moves by the Department of Health to implement a more collaborative approach between the public and private healthcare sectors.

The survey of nearly 300 pharmacists revealed that confidence about the future of the healthcare system in South Africa over the next five years rose 3 percentage points to 44%. Furthermore, 49% of respondents said they agreed with the principle behind the National Health Insurance (NHI) initiative, up 2 percentage points to 49%.

According to Gerhard Joubert, Head of Group Marketing and Stakeholder Relations at PPS, the financial services provider focused on graduate professionals, the increase in confidence on key issues relating to their industry is indicative of Health Minister Dr Aaron Motsoaledi's recent announcement that he has established a partnership with 23 of South Africa's largest private medical aid, pharmacy, drug and hospital companies to boost capacity in the public sector.

A further result from the survey, however, revealed that only 13% of respondents believe that NHI is the solution to fix the country's ailing health system, down 2 percentage points from the previous survey.

Ivan Kotzé, Executive Director of the Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa, tells of the PSSA's reaction to statements made by the Director General of Health, Precious Matsoso, when she addressed the 2012 PSSA conference. "We welcomed Ms Matsoso's comment that for the NHI to work, the government must first address and improve the quality of service in the public sector. She further made it clear that government recognizes that the funding option will be the biggest challenge. The PSSA believes that the current private sector infrastructure and services must be accommodated in the provision of services under NHI as it would be unproductive and too costly to try to reproduce these through public sector providers."

"The private medical industry in South Africa is supportive of the government taking measures to improve the level of healthcare currently being provided to all citizens, even if NHI is not the route they would necessarily choose to implement this change. There has been much debate among professionals as to the merits of NHI over the last 12 months and while this debate does continue, there is little doubt that professionals believe that the private sector must play a significant role if the system is to work successfully," says Joubert.

Dr Motsoaledi announced that the SA Joint Public Health Enhancement Fund (SAJPHEF) will receive a fixed annual contribution from individual private sector companies, which will be used to train more healthcare professionals, especially potential doctors from poor communities.

Other findings from the survey also reveal strong levels of optimism on their own profession, with a confidence level of 72% among pharmacists on the future of their profession over the next five years and a confidence level of 65% on their ability to earn an income that keeps up with inflation.

Joubert notes that on a number of key socio-economic issues, pharmacists remain fairly subdued. Confidence in the standard of education in South Africa improving over the next five years was unchanged at 43%, while confidence in crime improving over the next five years fell 1 percentage point to an alarming 37%.

“The survey has revealed that while pharmacists are more confident about the implementation of NHI, they are still highly concerned about a number of key issues that directly impact their profession, as well as broader issues facing the country as a whole. It is important that these concerns are taken into consideration and steps are taken to rectify confidence levels in order to sustain the pharmaceutical profession,” concludes Joubert.

Other results from the survey:

- Confidence that we have seen the worst of the global economic turmoil was unchanged at 49%
- Confidence in the economic outlook for South Africa over the next 12 months was down three percentage points to 54%
- Confidence in the outlook for local equity / share markets was unchanged at 60%
- Confidence that they would remain in South Africa for the foreseeable future fell two percentage points to 78%
- Confidence that they are able to comply with the conditions of the Consumer Protection Act rose two percentage points to 67%