



FOR PROFESSIONALS  
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## TRAINING AND STAFFING REMAIN KEY CONCERNS FOR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS - SURVEY

*26 August 2015:* More than half of South Africa's doctors do not have confidence in the current standards of training in their profession, according to a new survey conducted by PPS among over 450 local medical professionals.

When respondents were asked whether they feel current training standards of medical students is appropriate to the requirements of the South African healthcare system, only 47% said they believed it was.

Commenting on the results, Dr Mark Sonderup, Vice-Chairman of the South African Medical Association (SAMA), says that globally medical education has significantly changed over the last two decades with a shift from curative to preventive, from doctor-centred to patient-centred and from didactic teaching to more integrated learning. "The question is whether what and how we teach is reflective of the broader needs of the country's healthcare system and burden of disease".

Although the process of change in medical teaching is taking place, he says that regardless of this change in teaching methods, the end result has not altered. "You still need to produce a competent doctor at the end of the training period, who can go on to be a competent Intern and ultimately be independent medical practitioners. Our exit standards remain high"

Macy Seperepere, Manager: Professional Associations at PPS, says the burden of disease is not limited to South Africa. "Every country has to deal with its own specific health problems; yet one of the common themes among many health problems nowadays is a direct result of poor lifestyle choices such as insufficient exercise, a poor diet and high rates of stress. It is important for people to realise the difference that making some small lifestyle changes can have on their overall health and wellbeing."

Interestingly, training is not the biggest issue facing the medical profession. When asked to name the biggest challenge currently for South African doctors, 26% said staffing levels; 24% said current standard of nursing skills; 20% said ageing infrastructure; 17% said lack of medical supplies and 13% said insufficient training.

There is no quick fix solution to addressing the shortcomings in the country's healthcare system, says Dr Mark Sonderup. "We need to train more doctors and we can only do this by increasing numbers at Universities and Medical Schools, while also growing the number of training platforms. As long as our burden of disease remains, the population increases and staff misdistribution between public and private sectors takes place, understaffing will remain a problem."

On the possible implementation of the Certificate of Need (CoN) – which proposes to regulate the locations in which doctors can practice - 83% of respondents said it will negatively impact the medical profession.

Dr Sonderup says revisions to the National Health Act in terms of the CoN were poorly drafted whilst the legislation itself is divisive and counterproductive. “It will not produce what is needed. There is no need to create “positive sentiment” – what is needed is to expunge it from the Statute.”

Despite some slightly concerning results, a confidence level of 71% was recorded among respondents when asked about their confidence in the future of their profession over the next five years.

“It is clear that there are still a number of challenges facing the medical profession, in terms of regulation as well as the quality of teaching and training that professionals receive. However, these are all fixable solutions and it is vital that all stakeholders work together to ensure the long-term sustainability of the healthcare industry, particularly as we look towards implementing some form of universal healthcare coverage in the future,” concludes Seperepere.