

NHI, crime drive brain drain

NATIONAL Health Insurance, crime and a shortage of maths and science graduates are pushing graduate professionals to consider emigration. The quarterly PPS Graduate Professionals Confidence Index, which tracks confidence levels of about 6 000 graduate professionals, found that the number of professionals who are confident of remaining in the country has dropped from 84 percent to 78 percent. PPS head of group marketing and stakeholder relations, Gerhard Joubert, said that though a confidence level of 78 percent was still very positive, it was of concern that this figure had declined. He said graduate professionals such as doctors, lawyers and accountants were a crucial segment of the economy and, as did many other countries, South Africa already faced a major skills shortage within these important professions. Joubert said it was crucial that the concerns of this segment were taken into account to ensure that further scarce skills were not lost. He said more dentists were considering emigrating because they were finding working in South Africa "tough" and were "not getting a slice of the pie". The SA Dental Association last year said some dentists were struggling to stay in practice because during tough economic times dentistry was low on the list of essential needs. The survey found that professionals were concerned about the feasibility of National Health Insurance and that confidence in the future of healthcare in South Africa dropped five percent to 45 percent. Eighty-four percent of professionals believed National Health Insurance was not the cure for the ailing health system. Joubert said professionals were concerned that the NHI green paper did not give sufficient detail. He said many graduate professionals supported the principle of improving the healthcare system to ensure better healthcare for all citizens but were concerned about the way in which it was being implemented. He said that further consultation on the issue was vital to ensure that all stakeholders bought into the process.

Nivashni Nair: The Times, 16 May 2012