

Medics doubt NHI's ability to cure health system

THE National Health Insurance (NHI) is seen as a threat by South Africa's medical professionals and even though most of them are behind the principle, they do not believe it will provide a solution to the country's ailing health system. A survey conducted by PPS, a financial services provider focused on graduate professionals, showed that professionals were concerned about their income earning ability following the implementation of the NHI. Just less than half of respondents said they would encourage their children to enter their chosen profession. PPS interviewed more than 800 medical professionals in the survey. They found that only 54 percent of respondents were confident they would earn sufficient income when the NHI was introduced. As a result, only 47 percent said they would encourage their children to enter the profession. Although more than half of them agreed with the principle behind the NHI, only 18 percent said they believed that the system would be the solution to the struggling health system. Gerhard Joubert, the head of group marketing and stakeholder relations at PPS, said the fact that much of the policy remained unknown was the reason behind the professionals' concern. He said that since the government's statement on NHI was released last year there had been concerns regarding the lack of information available and medical professionals were worried about the impact it would have on the industry. Joubert said respondents were also concerned about the standard of current training of medical students, with just 57 percent still confident that it was adequate. He said these statistics were extremely worrying, given that the country had such a strong track record of medical training. The concerns remain despite the Department of Health's release of a human resource strategy for the NHI last year.

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