

July conference to look at pharmacists' role in NHI

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PHARMACISTS are gearing up to play a key role under National Health Insurance (NHI) when SA enters the second phase of implementing the universal health coverage policy.

Pharmacists are important in the healthcare system because of the role they play in under-resourced areas, where they provide affordable diagnosis, education and screening. The Pharmaceutical Society of SA's (PSSA's) Lorraine Osman said that following a meeting with Department of Health director-general Malebona Matsoso to discuss the next steps for pharmacists in terms of NHI, a task team has been formed to develop practical proposals for pharmacists' involvement in the system. The PSSA, which has more than 8 000 members, is the biggest representative body for pharmacists, pharmacists' assistants and pharmacy students in the country. Osman said no country attempting to introduce universal health coverage could expect it to be smooth sailing.

The PSSA has been asked to work with Dr Anban Pillay, deputy director general for health regulation and compliance management, to map the way forward.

The organisation is to host a combined conference in July to identify ways in which pharmacists can prepare themselves to participate in NHI. Joggie Hattingh, president of the South African Association of Hospital and Institutional Pharmacists, said although young pharmacists faced challenges in finding internships and placements for community service, they had to prepare for NHI. He said as all pharmacists are required to participate in continued professional development, the preparation for these changes forms part of growing as a professional. The Pharmacy Advisory Board, a new multi stakeholder representative body for pharmacists, was established in April to transform the sector and to identify key issues pharmacists face daily and their role in the changing health landscape.

Michelle Gumede: Business Day, 12 May 2017