

# Mediclinic to provide 10 prostate cancer patients with free surgery 27 FEBRUARY 2018

BUSINESS DAY

Mediclinic. Picture: SOWETAN

Private hospital group Mediclinic is offering a limited number of free procedures to state patients, as it seeks to build closer ties with the government. The state has historically been wary of entering into public-private partnerships, but private hospital players hope the implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme will open up new opportunities.

In the latest of a series of collaborative ventures with provincial health departments, Mediclinic announced on Tuesday that it would provide 10 prostate cancer patients from Tygerberg Hospital with cutting-edge precision surgery using the Da Vinci robot.

The technology is not currently available in the state sector, so they will be the first state patients to benefit from it. Mediclinic has already provided dozens of cataract, urology and ear drum repair procedures at no cost to the state in the Western Cape, Free State and Limpopo.

The latest collaboration with the Western Cape health department will also provide a training opportunity for registrars, who are studying to become specialists.

The biggest obstacle to public-private partnerships was the lack of trust between government and business, said Mediclinic Southern Africa CEO Koert Pretorius

"We think there should be a lot more co-operation between the public and private sectors, as it would (optimise) scarce skills," he said. "We are very positive about public-private partnerships, as we often have spare capacity," he said.

"We could do it on a marginal cost basis, but could do it at a significantly reduced cost if we got state pharmaceutical prices and [did] not have to pay VAT," he said.

Western Cape health MEC Nomafrench Mbombo said universal healthcare would require strong public-private partnerships. "It's not about whether the state should work with the private sector, but how .... The Western Cape can pilot this," she added.

The precision of the Da Vinci robotic surgery means there is less nerve damage and better removal of cancerous tissue than with open surgery, and patients generally spend less time in hospital and have fewer complications, urologist Gawie Bruwer said. "It is like doing a procedure under a microscope," he said.