

National Health Insurance nears implementation – Zululand Observer

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NATIONAL Health Insurance (NHI), which has already been piloted in three districts in the province, is nearing implementation. This was announced by Health Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize last week, who said the bill would soon be tabled in Parliament.

‘The unresolved issues of unaffordable private health care and poor levels of service delivery in the public sector have impacted negatively on our national health care system.

‘This has resulted in our inability to ensure that all South Africans have access to quality health care based on need and not on their ability to pay,’ Mkhize said.

He said making progress towards universal health coverage therefore requires transformation of the health system.

‘It requires a reconfiguration of institutions for the pooling of funds and purchasing of services to achieve social solidarity, efficiency, effectiveness, income and risk cross-subsidisation,’ he said.

In 2017 Deputy Director General for NHI in KZN, Mfowethu Zungu, said the King Cetshwayo District had already begun paving the way for the full implementation of health insurance.

Zungu outlined a number of projects, including upgrades at Queen Nandi and Ngwelezana hospitals to ensure readiness for the health system.

He said they were also working on ensuring that all hospital and clinic records are electronically captured for when NHI is implemented, so that every patient has a unique identification number.

‘Even if you visit a different province and you need medication, health facilities are able to access your records and provide assistance,’ he said.

He said universal access to health will ensure that all South Africans, employed or unemployed, are provided with essential health care.

‘It will allow for access to comprehensive health care services free of charge at accredited health facilities such as clinics, hospitals and private health practitioners closest to where people live and work.

‘When we budget for health in the country, we budget more than R200-billion a year, but a large amount ends up in the private sector. This does not benefit people in rural areas.’