

“NHI won’t force people to use government facilities”

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JOHANNESBURG – Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi says once the National Health Insurance (NHI) system is introduced, it won’t force people to use government hospitals, if they want to use private ones.

Yesterday, health lawyer Neil Kirby said that the current proposals for the NHI could be unconstitutional because they would force someone to join the system.

It’s also been claimed that once the system is introduced, people could find they are not allowed to use private healthcare facilities and have to use government hospitals.

But Motsoaledi says that is not the case.

“Do we force you to use a public hospital? No, we don’t. But what we are doing here [is that] NHI is going to set prices to say ‘for this and that procedure, this is the price that we are setting.’”

Last year, the Health Department made the white paper available for public engagement and comment.

The document outlines the steps government will take to implement its universal healthcare system.

The minister said the implementation of the insurance scheme will be a lengthy and meticulous process.

Motsoaledi said, in the end, socio-economic status will no longer dictate who in South Africa can access quality healthcare.

“You don’t classify people according to their socio-economic status; you classify them according to their health needs.”

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Stephen Grootes