

## **NHI is going to happen, but who will fund it?**

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South Africa's healthcare system is on the brink of a total overhaul, with the White Paper on National Health Insurance (NHI) having been released for public comment in December 2015. Once implemented, the NHI aims to ensure universal healthcare for all, bridging the current affordability gap between the 84% of people who do not have access, and the 16% of South Africans who can afford private healthcare. But, with the South African economy under pressure, the healthcare industry has raised concerns regarding how the NHI can be funded to ensure universal healthcare for all.

"This year's BHF conference will focus on NHI as a vehicle to achieving universal healthcare. We will be debating strategies around different funding models and how we can work together to create a more patient-centric health system," says Zola Mtshiyi: Manager Marketing, Communications and Branding at the Board of Healthcare Funders (BHF).

"We believe very strongly that every human being deserves the same high quality healthcare. We call for policy reforms in line with the constitution that will result in a more open, equitable and accountable system, across the board."

The 17th annual BHF Conference, entitled A Roadmap to Universal Healthcare, will be held at the CTICC from 17 - 20 July.

The conference has attracted an impressive line-up of local and international speakers and is expected to draw more than 900 representatives from the healthcare industry, including local, regional and international healthcare executives, healthcare professionals, policy makers and regulators.

Delegates will have the opportunity to network, share evidence and exchange experiences with representatives from Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Botswana. Albie Sachs, former Justice of the Constitutional Court, will set the scene for the conference, with his opening address: The constitutional obligation the state has to enable the right to access healthcare services for all. This will be followed by keynote speaker Professor Mcebisi Ndletyana from the University of Johannesburg, with his topic: The role of business and civil society in saving our democracy and economy.

The conference will be divided into several sessions:

**Why Universal Healthcare?** This session sees a keynote address by Dr Adam Wagstaff from the World Bank on Universal Health Coverage – what have we learnt so far? Followed by Dr Sarah Barber from

the World Health Organisation on Transforming our World – the 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development, and Professor van Niekerk from the Rhodes Institute of Social and Economic Research on why Universal Healthcare must happen and how the nation will benefit.

**NHI Funding:** Elias Masilela from the National Planning Commission will be among the speakers contributing to the debate when he discusses whether the economy or the health sector should adjust to ensure the sustainability of NHI. Bongani Khumalo from the Financial and Fiscal Commission (FFC), will provide valuable insight into how NHI funding should be balanced, with a focus on the requirements and implications of the intergovernmental system, whilst Amanda Jitsing and Fouche Venter from DNA will present Options for financing the NHI – an overview of the fiscal capacity and instruments.

**Taking the lead.** The search for the perfect healthcare system necessitates a good look at what other countries are doing. Dr Mark Britnell from KMPG Global Health Practice in the UK will provide some clear comparisons and best practice from other countries, followed by a panel discussion by industry captains such as Judy Dlamini of the Mbekani Group and Sandile Zungu of ZICO on Short term strategic imperatives: investing in an efficient health system.

**A roadmap to a patient-centric healthcare system.** Featuring presentations by Dr Rajesh Patel from BHF Benefit and Risk, Thembekile Phaswane from the CMS and Bella Mfenyana from GEMS, the whole gamut of healthcare, from the “ideal of accountable patient-centric care” to the “rise of an empowered patient” and “why medical scheme members are complaining” will be examined. Advocate Hasina Cassim will talk on Health market inquiry: what have we learnt?

**Creating access through innovation.** Among the key speakers will be Kuldeep Singh Rajput, who works for Singapore-based data analytics company Biofourmis, which has developed a revolutionary approach to home-based care and personalised service. His fascinating presentation will include a look at wearable technologies and bio-electronic medicine. Continuing this theme will be Dr Farayi Chinyanga from Medscheme, who will speak on healthcare innovation in the context of NHI.

**Mitigating risk.** Key speakers will include Alanna Lavelle, a former FBI agent who has turned her attention to combating fraud in the healthcare industry; fraud risk mitigation presentations by Lameez Scholz from the BHF and Dr Hleli Nhlapo from DENIS and Alex Muller from PwC, who will talk on Cyber and IT risk for healthcare organisations – no longer just a ‘ what if’, but a ‘ when’.

**Cost drivers. Enough talk: what are the solutions?** Topics include drivers of hospital prices in SA by Thomas Roubal from the World Health Organisation; drivers of expenditure on pathology costs,

improving access to medicine in SA and sessions on fraud waste and abuse, as well as how other countries achieve good health at low cost.

The closing session of the conference will see industry captains coming together to decide on **action plans to make universal healthcare a reality.**

The conference will also host the 2nd Annual Titanium Awards. Adjudicated by a panel of well-respected health professionals, the Awards recognise and honour top performers in the public and private healthcare sector in southern Africa, and those delivering superior service to their customers and members.

“By recognising benchmarks for exceptional performance, we aim to drive standards and service delivery, which, in the long term, will help build a more effective healthcare industry overall,” Mtshiya concludes.

*By Zola Mtshiya, BHF*