

‘Strong leadership key to successful NHI’

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Pretoria - Strong leadership and political presence were among the key factors in the implementation of a universal health-care system in the country.

In addition to new care models, a sound payment system and empowered citizens, this could lead to the success to the National Health Insurance programme. “There are bold steps to be taken, and with most countries in the world under pressure to provide universal health care, South Africa has many global lessons to learn from,” said KPMG chairman and partner of the Global Health Practice, Dr Mark Britnell.

There was a massive exodus of doctors from the country and ways to counter that had to be found, said Dr Mark Britnell. He said the implementation of a universal, quality health-care system was a marathon and not a sprint.

“It is a process to be implemented in stages. South Africa has only 5 million people paying taxes; you need more to fund a successful scheme,” he said. There had to be a healthy mix of public and private funders, Britnell told health professionals during the Innovative Medicine Summit.

Talking to health professionals from across all sectors, government officials and members from international innovation companies, Britnell said no country had failed in providing universal access.

“A rising tide floats all boats,” he said. And all players had to do their bit. “If South Africa is keen to ensure access to universal health care, it must involve the pharmaceutical industry,” he said.

New care models had to replace the country’s hospital-dominated model of care. There was a massive exodus of doctors from the country and ways to counter that had to be found, he said. “Risks have to be taken and government must not be passive.” He spoke of the role of citizens in universal health care.

“We known that 40% of people don’t stick to drug regimes; that too needs to change,” said Britnell. Patients had to become activated participants, valuable partners in healthcare. Pharmaceutical professionals had to play their part in encouraging compliance. “The alternative would be to remain pill pushers and nothing more,” he said.

Britnell told the participants of the summit hosted by the International Pharmaceutical Association of South Africa that many countries which ran highly successful universal health-care schemes took years to get it right.

“Remember it is a marathon and not a sprint. Building blocks must be clearly defined every step of the way. You have nothing to fear. Every country that adopted it has prospered.”

The supply, distribution and consumption of medicines were an integral part on providing universal health care and pharmaceutical companies had to run it efficiently.

By Ntando Makhubu - Business News