

## **Press Release**

**26 June 2016**

### **BHF calls for paradigm shift in support of NHI**

When the Minister of Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi published his opinion on the future of healthcare in South Africa in a Sunday newspaper this past weekend, Dr Humphrey Zokufa, MD of the Board of Healthcare Funders, was very encouraged.

He saw the opinion as a reiteration of the fact that the BHF and the Minister “are united both in our determination to provide better healthcare for all South Africans, and in the direction we must take to achieve this goal.”

The Minister’s statement was timely, coming just a month before the annual BHF conference which will be focusing on universal healthcare as an important basic right that must be realised.

Dr Motsoaledi said the power of pooling means that we can afford to insure all our people, and Dr Zokufa fully concurs.

“At the moment the health Rand is fragmented,” Dr Zokufa said. “The money is in different pockets. It is stretched between the nine provinces, the Road Accident Fund, Occupational Health and 83 medical schemes.

“It is the role of Government to intervene here,” Dr Zokufa said. “They have the responsibility according to Section 27 of the Constitution, to make sure that we pool the money for healthcare. It is concerning to us when various parties question this accountability and do not support the government’s intervention here. The current situation when it comes to healthcare is not benefiting all South Africans. Government has no option but to intervene or it would be abdicating its responsibility.”

The BHF has identified many of the problems with the current system, including fragmentation and high and unregulated health costs, which are causing it to be unsustainable.

“People are paying contributions to their medical schemes that are higher than inflation. They have to pay co-payments and their benefits run out. The pool of insured people is not increasing and those who are insured are ageing. In a situation like this, Government has no option but to intervene, and that intervention is taking the form of the NHI,” he explained.

Dr Zokufa questioned the motive of various parties who are questioning what the government is trying to do.

“One begins to question,” he said. “Are they basing their comments on self-interest? Are they really interested in providing healthcare for all South Africans?”

The constructive way to move forward is to find ways to work with government and to find ways to enrich the process.

Dr Zokufa is encouraged by the lack of detail in the NHI White Paper because he sees it as opening the door to engage with various parties to establish the details about how best to achieve the shared aims of the NHI.

Dr Zokufa also supported the Minister's comments on alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

"You can't blame the providers of healthcare in the private sector from following the money," he said. "What has to happen is that the money is pooled so that all providers should be remunerated adequately and all South Africans should experience the same high quality of care from accredited healthcare providers."

For Dr Zokufa, the private healthcare sector is no stranger to the benefits of pooling resources, which has been happening for the past 10 years as smaller medical schemes have merged.

"The current model of healthcare in South Africa must change," he said. "As BHF we fully support NHI. We are going to participate to ensure that it is implemented and managed effectively and efficiently."

"Our population is our biggest asset," he said. "If we want to see economic growth and the implementation of the National Development Plan, we need to change the paradigm. We have an opportunity to participate in correcting what is wrong and to invest in improving the health of our nation. That is why we are 100 percent behind the NHI."

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