

**ReTHE BOARD OF HEALTHCARE FUNDERS (BHF) SOUTHERN  
AFRICAN ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**“HEALTHCARE IN SOUTH AFRICA – A NEW DIMENSION”**

**Sun City, 30<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2009**

As the 2009 annual BHF conference draws to a close, debate regarding South Africa’s proposed NHI continues. The conference drew internationally renowned speakers and 900 delegates made up of local, regional and international healthcare experts, policymakers and regulators. The focus was on the NHI and the conference achieved much in terms of engaging different views, addressing the facts and working out some next steps.

Deputy Minister of Health, Dr Molefi Sefularo opened the conference.

“As you all might know, the NHI is integral to ANC health policy, as stated in the 1994 ANC National Health Plan for South Africa, a document that continues to guide the transformation of the health sector.”

BHF represents 95% of the medical schemes in Southern Africa and publicly supports the implementation of a National Health Insurance that is based on the principle of universal coverage for all South Africans. It is their view that private healthcare can ably assist government with the NHI roll-out.

“The BHF model promotes the participation of medical schemes within the NHI environment in a mutually beneficial, constructive manner.” – Dr Clarence Mini, BHF Director.

While the expertise of the private healthcare system has caught the government’s attention, experts highlight the need for an overhauling of not only the public health sector but the private sector too.

“Private health sector cannot be part of the solution until it acknowledges that it is part of the problem. Medical Aid contributions have increased beyond inflation and are 30% of the average worker’s income. The private sector has the power to make healthcare in SA affordable.” – Professor Di McIntyre, Health Economist UCT.

According to Deputy Minister Sefularo, the NHI documents are not ready for release or debate. However he urges the private health sector to continue to plan, discuss and propose recommendations that will make the intellectual, financial and technical resources available to government in order to take the NHI forward.

Dr Humphrey Zokufa, MD of BHF, BHF comments on the conference's achievements.

"From this conference we have gained a good idea of what the government intends for NHI. There's no doubt that the NHI will be a South African reality with structural legislation coming into effect in the next few years. It's a plan that will no doubt be rolled out in phases – there's a lot of work to be done! The conference got providers, funders, government, private and public sectors all talking, debating and listening. This has resulted in the government planning significant engagement with the private sector. There is an acknowledgement by all that the healthcare system is not sustainable – this includes both the public and the private sectors – and changes need to be made. BHF will be adding details to its NHI proposal with a focus on a more holistic health sector approach. The funders are centrally placed between government and providers; hence we will work more closely with healthcare providers towards attaining a model in which the private sector plays an integral role under NHI. Everyone agrees, we've got one shot at implementing NHI – we better get it right."