

PPBU Member Update on NHI Bill

As many will be aware, the NHI Bill was passed by parliament on the 13th of June 2023. This was widely expected but still disappointing in that the Bill was passed unaltered **despite many inputs from this Society** (at great cost of time and effort) and many other citizen groups and concerned parties.

Consequently, various professional bodies have **formed a loose alliance** to investigate the potential challenges to the Bill and to discuss how the Bill will impact us going forward. The group includes:

- * SASA,
- * the Radiological Society of South Africa (RSSA),
- * the South African Private Practitioners Forum (SAPPF),
- * the South African Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (SASOG),
- * the South African Dental Association (SADA),
- * the South African Medical Association (SAMA), and
- * The Orthopaedic Society.

SASA is represented here by our CEO and various members of the PPBU Exco and PSBU (as we feel the issue of the NHI will affect all sectors of anaesthesia), according to availability. The group is widely representative of private practice healthcare and may well be joined by other disciplines including pharmacy and physio/occupational therapy groups.

This group has had presentations from the Hospital Association of South Africa (HASA) and Business4SA (B4SA) at separate meetings in October. These were to ascertain the position of these groups and to find common ground. While there is some agreement on areas of the Bill which are problematic, it is the opinion of SASA that we as HCPs should not directly affiliate ourselves with these organizations.

We wish to stress that our strength always lies in our ability to engage in strategic collaborations where our vision and agendas align with those of others, and we will continue to search for common ground.

The consensus is that there is no ability to challenge the NHI Bill in any court until such time as it is signed into Law by the President. Given the concerns raised in the Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement on 1 November, the group feels that the NHI Bill is unlikely to be implemented in any meaningful way within the next few years.

Due to the size of the group a smaller 'exco' has been broken off where a number of representatives of these groups are present.

This group held a report back on 1 November 2023. Matters arising from the report back:

- * **Appoint a public relations company** to manage communications from this group in the public space – this includes the preparation of a statement to be released in the event that the NHI Bill is signed by the President during the December holidays (which is anticipated). It is critical that the message conveyed is that we, as SASA have patient care as our primary responsibility and concern.
- * **Identifying concerns common to all the participating groups** including post graduate training in private facilities, the role of the HPCSA in healthcare law reform, and protection of the autonomy of doctors going forward.

SASA will continue to represent the interests of our members and our patients in these and other fora. We remain committed to equitable, quality healthcare access while maintaining the sustainability of anaesthesia practice and healthcare in South Africa.