

Summary of Health Issues in South Africa

Period 09/02/2016 – 12/02/2016

Once again the question of litigious matters against medical professional is under the spotlight in South Africa. The importance and necessity of specialists is under pressure due to the rise in such medical negligence claims, this will have the effect of making such necessary specialist treatment just more expensive to the general public. These increases in medical costs in the private sector is believed to have a negative influence, such as the reduction of experts in this profession. The amount of claims against such has risen in the area of 27% in the past six years.

The amounts being claimed have risen to such an extent that it is feared to belong to schemes covering such would become unaffordable to many. This burden then has a result in the public sector taking on more on its already heavily burdened shoulders.

It is apparent that there does not exist a system whereby complaints could be lodged, leaving the aggrieved no option but to resort to litigation. Mediation, as an alternative has been suggested as a solution to the legal process.

There is opinions that medical professionals should be more empathetic to patients and confess up to any wrong doing straight away. A fair and reasonable amount should be forthcoming to curb the costs of litigation. At the same time a vigorous defence, if necessary should be raised.

The Minister of Health's comments merely were that "*the ultimate loser was the public*" whilst noting the budget for healthcare would have to be increased to cove this ever increasing litigation.

REFERENCE: AFRICA NEWS AGENCY VIA THE CAPE TIMES, 9TH FEBRUARY 2016

After a lengthy struggle, the Pharmacy Council of South Africa Registrar and the CEO, Amos Masango have without much a to do, lifted the ban on pharmacists to sell take-home HIV testing kits. This battle has been long debated since 2010 for a variety of reasons. The response to such has been of a positive note.

REFERENCE: LAURA LOPZ GONZALEZ, KEDIBONYE POLAO 7 VIVIAN WARBY:

HEALTH-E NEWS SERVICE, 9TH FEBRUARY 2016

The issues now turn to a rather disturbing set of events. Dental assistants, essential to any dental practise, are about to find themselves in a situation that is going to cause reason for grave concern. The HPCSA has, now, according to legislation (promulgated in 2005), come into effect, the result being that as of the end of March 2016, all such dental assistants will have to be registered with the HPCSA and that they no longer possess the necessary qualifications for their occupation, and face having to further study for one more year.

Dramatically, any unregistered dental assistant will have to leave their occupation, alternatively be charged with a criminal offence. The effect of this leaves a dentist to perform a perform complex procedures on their own, now more time consuming for the dentist concerned and possibly escalating costs.

The CEO of the SA Dental Association, has expressed concern that the effect of this new legislation might have a negative impact, causing dental practises to close down and dentist to seek work abroad.

The situation is worsened by the fact that there are in the region of 2500 unregistered dentists and only 250 vacancies at four universities of technology that offer the required course.

An unsuccessful attempt to take on the legislation in court has already occurred, apparently due to the fact that the new regulations promulgated in 2005 went by unchallenged. Thus dental assistants had been afforded the opportunity of registering for ten years now. Help had even been afforded to assist dental assistants to register. The long and short of it is that there are not enough dental assistants currently registered to manage the workload.

There has been a response from those that have tried to register, unsuccessfully. Many had tried but had not received any response from the HPCSA.

REFERENCE: KATHERINE CHILD: THE TIMES, 9TH FEBRUARY 2016