

Press Release:

URGENT ACTION REQUIRED TO HEAL SOUTH AFRICA'S HEALTH - BOARD OF HEALTHCARE FUNDERS CONFERENCE 2014

25 August 2014; With less than 500 days left before the deadline for the achievement of the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) expires, Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi has made an impassioned plea to the private healthcare sector to embrace change in order to bring about a more equitable and accessible healthcare system that will be able to tackle and reduce South Africa's growing disease burden.

Opening the 15th annual Board of Healthcare Funders (BHF) Southern African Conference in Durban, Dr Motsoaledi said that even if the MDGs are not achieved by the 2015 deadline they will not be abandoned. He warned against the impact of the 'exploding' epidemic of non-communicable diseases, saying that healthcare funders will be the hardest hit if they fail to introduce and support health promotion and disease prevention measures aimed at reducing risk factors such as; smoking, alcohol abuse, obesity and lack of exercise.

A National Health Commission will be established in the near future tasked with addressing issues around health promotion and disease prevention through relevant research, and the implementation and legislation of measures aimed at improving the health of the country. The commission will be chaired by the deputy president of the country, assisted by healthcare academics.

According to Dr Motsoaledi, representatives from all sectors of society including business, the private and public health sectors, civil society and academia will be invited to sit on the commission's board to advise on the measures needed to stop the country's escalating disease burden.

Although refraining from mentioning the long-awaited White Paper on National Health Insurance (NHI), he emphasised that universal health coverage was part of the world health agenda and that there was no walking away from it.

"As social and economic systems change so do health systems. We need to embrace that change to maximise the opportunities," Dr Motsoaledi said, referring to the National Development Plan (NDP) as the road map for the development of an effective, efficient, quality health system in the country.

Amongst others, the NDP's vision for health is to increase life expectancy in South Africa to age 70, a radical reduction in the quadruple burden of disease, an under-20 HIV-free generation and a dramatic decrease in child mortality. It also aims to phase in the introduction of NHI, lower the cost of private health care, improve the poor healthcare quality in the public system and address the inequality and inefficiencies in both the private and public sectors.

"Inefficiencies in the private and public sector are caused by different things," Dr Motsoaledi pointed out. "In the public sector, it is poor quality of care that we are trying to resolve. In the private sector, it is the growing problem of exorbitant fees because no system can be efficient if it is too expensive."

“There is sufficient goodwill in the healthcare system to achieve the vision of the NDP, but to realise it we need commitment and cooperation across both sectors instead of fragmented solutions,” he concluded.

Ends/

Editor’s Notes:

The Board of Healthcare Funders of Southern Africa (BHF) is the representative body for the majority of medical schemes throughout South Africa, Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Please refer to the attached provisional conference programme for the full list of presentations.

For media registration to attend the BHF Conference 2014 [click here](#).

Issued by Epic Communications on behalf of The Board of Healthcare Funders of Southern Africa