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HEALTHCARE and the FREE DEMOCRATS

Health minister Dr Aaron Motsoaledi says that NHI is the only viable plan to ensure quality health care for all.

National Health Insurance or NHI will over time send us all back to State Hospitals. The stated intention is to reduce and phase out private health care. GP's will become state employees.

The South African reality speaks of instances of atrociously poor care at state hospitals (with a few notable exceptions). In many places in South Africa, going to a state hospital is a true gamble with your health. Nearly every South African can recount horror stories of their experience at state hospitals, either themselves, their family or their friends.

By contrast, private health care in South Africa (despite its short comings and imperfections) in general provide quality health care to the 16 – 20 % of the population who can afford it.

The challenge is to provide quality health care to every South African citizen.

Every South African is entitled to the best medical treatment available and that is not happening at State Hospitals.

The Free Democrats propose the creation of a health insurance fund (similar to unemployment insurance fund) funded by a payroll deduction of approximately 5 %. We further propose the setting up of a medical aid for each and every adult South African, administered by the private medical aid industry. Everybody contributes to the health insurance fund, whether you are a grant recipient or whether you earn thousands a month. Everybody contributes 5 %. Employer contributes 5 %. In the case of grant recipients the state contributes the other 5 %.

Parliament sets the fees of service providers, surgical procedures and treatment protocols and maintains oversight.

This ensures that the card-carrying medical aid member receives quality health care in the private sector, free at point of delivery.

The alternative of National Health Insurance is a massive disaster in the making.

The minister recently admitted that at least 41 % of his entire budget was not available for health care. Mega millions are going to individuals and their attorneys who successfully obtained court orders against the Department of Health after numerous medicolegal calamities in the state system, yet the minister has the temerity to suggest that going for more state health care is the solution.

From the moment he first mooted the introduction of National Health Insurance, scarce South Africans skills, general practitioners and especially specialists have left the country in droves. We can ill afford to lose such skills, most of whose experience and niche capabilities are irreplaceable.

Most important is that the state has disqualified itself from being involved in health care. The state, during the last 25 years has such a rich history of rampant corruption, waste and mismanagement. South Africans' justifiable fear that the eye-watering billions going to government departments will be captured, looted, raided, stolen, wasted and the balance will go to Dubai.

National Health Insurance will certainly require increased taxes in some shape of form. The hard working tax payer will have to fork out billions which will arrive in the Department of Health. Little of the budget will be available for quality health care.

The situation in the Department of Health is so dire that serious consideration should be given to privatizing all state hospitals. Every state hospital should have its own board of directors or governors, appoint its own chief executive and generate its own income from individuals who arrive on their doorstep with their medical aid card (under the dispensation proposed by the Free Democrats).

Department of Health should be kept out of the loop. This department, according to the auditor general, has never seen a clean audit. In his most recent report dated 21 November 2018 the auditor general stated that the bad accounting situation in the Department of Health further deteriorated in the period under review.

The election of May 2019 should be about quality health care for every citizen.

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