

SADA Communique

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As we approach the end of the year, there are many things that are happening which will change the face of dentistry in South Africa. The first one is where South Africa aims to make significant strides in moving towards universal health care (UHC) through the implementation of National Health Insurance (NHI) based on the principle of the Constitutional right of citizens to have access to quality healthcare services that are delivered equitably, affordably, efficiently, effectively and appropriately based on social solidarity, progressive universalism, equity and health as a public good and a social investment. The second one aims to acquire data from dental practices (private and state) through an application that will be loaded onto a tablet or an android phone. In collecting information about South African patients' oral health status, quality of life, behaviours and access to services, it is hoped that the information gathered will assist health institutions and educational institutions in the drawing up of health policies that will be beneficial to all South Africans.

THE NHI IMPLEMENTATION

The Department of Health gazetted the White paper on NHI in June of this year. Since then SADA has engaged on numerous occasions with the Director and Deputy Director General of Health with regards to how we as can assist in making the NHI implementable with regards to oral health services. We have taken the initiative to invite representatives of the entire oral health profession to participate in drafting a submission to the Health Ministry that will encompass the basket of oral health services we would expect to be covered under NHI at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of care.

The NHI Task Team consisting of representation from SADA, OHASA, DENTASA, SADTA, APSA, SASPIO, SASO, SASMFOS, Community Dentistry as well as the various academic institutions met for the first time earlier this month. The Team had the opportunity to seek clarity on a number of questions from the Deputy Director General of Health, Dr Anban Pillay following an informative presentation by him. Thereafter a robust discussion was held and the way forward defined.

The team will meet again early December to collate feedback received from their respective associations/societies where we will hopefully begin the first draft of our submission. We are very encouraged by the overwhelming positive feedback received from the oral health profession and are confident we will be able to make a substantial impact in advising the NHI Benefit Advisory Committee on defining the oral health package.

FDI ORAL HEALTH OBSERVATION SURVEY

The South African Dental Association was selected as one of the 10 National Dental Associations (NDA's) to participate in an Oral Health Observation Survey. The FDI hopes that this information will provide a more current picture of the Oral Health landscape in South Africa.

The project will be conducted in two phases in South Africa. This is because ethical clearance is required to conduct this research at state clinics. The FDI is currently in the process of developing or compiling this document. Head Office initially requested 26 members of the SADA National Council to participate in the first phase of the project. However due to poor participation by the National Council members, the offer to participate in this study has thus been extended to all SADA members so as to acquire the 26 dental practices required. The accompanying excel document summarizes the process on how the dental practices are to be selected in South Africa across all provinces.

The document explains as to which regions the dental practices need to be located in order for the sample to be as representative as possible (private dental practices). A Memorandum of Understanding, as well as a dentist toolkit, will be sent to participating dental practices to know how to roll out the survey. The Association is in discussions with FDI with regards to the translation of the app menus and questions into some of the most spoken languages in South Africa for the patients to understand what information is required from them.

The SADA FDI Liaison Officer is the contact person for information and inclusion in the study.

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