



## Editorial

# Pharmacists are indispensable healthcare providers and are essential to the success of the NHI system

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The recent implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI) Act and the amendments to the Mid-Level Worker Regulations present both challenges and opportunities for pharmacists to adapt and thrive in the evolving healthcare landscape.

The NHI Act, signed into law in May 2024, aims to achieve universal health coverage for all South African residents. This landmark legislation will require pharmacists working in both public and private sectors to register with the NHI Fund, adhere to its regulations, and adapt to new payment structures for the provision of pharmaceutical care. Pharmacists will play a crucial role in the successful rollout of the NHI, dispensing medications, providing patient education, and ensuring the appropriate use of medicines by NHI beneficiaries. The NHI's focus on integrated and coordinated care will necessitate the development of new collaborative practice models and the enhancement of pharmacists' clinical skills and expertise.<sup>1-4</sup>

The South African Pharmacy Council (SAPC) has published amendments to the Mid-Level Worker Regulations, set to be implemented in April 2024.<sup>5</sup> These changes establish a clear career path for pharmacy support personnel and introduce the Pharmacy Technician qualification. The Pharmacist's Assistant (Basic) and Pharmacist's Assistant (Post-Basic) qualifications have been registered on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF), allowing progression from Basic to Post-Basic level and potentially to the Pharmacy Technician qualification.<sup>5</sup> Pharmacy technicians can provide technical support in dispensing prescriptions and selling Schedule 0, 1, and 2 medicines under pharmacist supervision.<sup>5</sup> The new Mid-Level Worker Regulations provide new opportunities for collaborative practice models within the pharmacy.

The implementation of the NHI Act and the amendments to the Mid-Level Worker Regulations presents both challenges and opportunities for pharmacists in South Africa. Including potentially increased responsibilities and scope of practice for pharmacists, changes to

reimbursement models, and the need for enhanced coordination and collaboration with other healthcare providers. This now also paves the way for significant opportunities, such as expanded roles for pharmacists in patient-centred care, increased recognition of pharmacists' expertise, and the potential for innovative service delivery models.

In this edition, we are excited to introduce the success story of a pharmacist with less than five years of experience, as well as invite pharmacists to share their thoughts and experiences. We encourage all pharmacists, regardless of their practice setting, to contribute their unique perspectives and insights. Please send us your contributions on the SAPJ platform <https://ojs.sabinet.co.za/index.php/sapj/about/submissions>.

The date is drawing near for the 82nd FIP World Congress of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences that will be held in Cape Town, South Africa, from September 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024. This presents an opportunity for South African pharmacists to engage with their global counterparts, learn about the latest advancements in the profession, and contribute to shaping the future of pharmacy. Do not forget to register <https://fip.eventsair.com/cape-town-2024/lp/Site/Register>.

## References

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