

# Predicting South Africa's healthcare of tomorrow against the backdrop of the NHI

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The private healthcare sector in South Africa has, for many years, been scrutinised due to high operating costs, as well as the glaring levels of disparity between the public and private sectors.



Source: Supplied. Damian McHugh executive at Momentum Health Solutions.

We as Momentum Health Solutions have made it clear that we support the provision of more healthcare for more South Africans, for less, against the backdrop of the National Health Insurance (NHI).

The NHI has been lauded as South Africa's healthcare saviour, catering to South Africans of all races, rich or poor and to legal long-term residents. We strongly support government on this journey to creating a healthcare sector that meets the needs of all.

However, it is critical that we address the imbalances in our healthcare industry in a collaborative manner, both in the private and public sectors, in a way that strengthens our healthcare system, without placing any additional burden on consumers' already stretched pockets.

Statistics show that the number of healthcare workers employed in South Africa within the private sector far outnumber those in the public sector. This matrix is not sustainable and can be attributed to the breakdown in the delivery of quality healthcare within the public sector to those who need it most.

As a private industry, we have built up skills that can contribute towards a healthier healthcare system.

Whether in health delivery, such as running hospitals, or paying claims, or creating incentives for people to change their behaviour; there is significant experience in the private sector that can be used to build a healthcare system in South Africa that works and caters to everyone, under the management of a system such as the NHI.



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Making use of the experience of both the public and private sectors to develop a system that runs as seamlessly as possible will be key in ensuring the NHI is a success and keeps true to its promise of addressing the substantial gaps in the delivery of quality healthcare to all South Africans.

A strong private sector does not undermine the public sector, just as a strong public sector does not undermine the private sector.

I believe we can have a system where the private sector can alleviate pressure in the public sector and more effectively utilise the available budget.

Furthermore, the implementation of the NHI will not be overnight.

There is a glaring misconception that the system will be applied as a single change over. The system will be implemented over time and the expectation is that phase one will focus on primary health.

Once that matures, the secondary phase will focus on tertiary care. As one can imagine, there is stringent policy that needs to be implemented and regulatory requirements that must be adhered to.

To further ensure its success, considerable opportunity exists for the medical-scheme industry and funders to embrace and meaningfully collaborate.

There is a clear need for us to work together with a common goal of improving our healthcare system by ensuring that healthcare standards across both public and private are improved in a more affordable manner.

At Momentum Health Solutions, we have a passion to deliver more health to more South Africans for less.

What we do not want to see is less health to less South Africans for more.

Any scenario that delivers healthcare in South Africa in a manner where there is wastage is inept, especially for a country that has the unique challenges that we do.

It is our goal to correct some of these challenges and imbalances by working closely alongside government to ensure the successful implementation of a fair, equitable, workable, and sustainable NHI system for all South Africans.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Damian McHugh is an executive at Momentum Health Solutions.

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