How to Start your own Medical Practice
ASAIPA was established in 2005 as a national network of and representative organisation for South African Independent Practitioners Associations (IPA’s).

Currently ASAIPA represents 15 (fifteen) IPA’s throughout South Africa, consisting of more or less 1120 independent General/Family practitioners and Allied Health professionals in individual and/or group practice.

What makes ASAIPA unique

- ASAIPA has a national footprint in every province throughout South Africa.
- ASAIPA is a voluntary association of members, and is legally registered as a non-profit organisation.
- The membership of ASAIPA is via the IPA’s, and the healthcare professionals that are members of their local IPA’s exercise their control via their local IPA’s. ASAIPA is therefore managed from the bottom up.
- ASAIPA is completely member funded, and therefore acts only in the best interest of its members and nobody else.
- ASAIPA is the largest consumer branded network of primary care practitioners in South Africa.

Why join ASAIPA

Primary care is under attack from all sides, and somebody must protect primary care practitioners and represent their interests. ASAIPA has a proven track record of more than 10 years and its sole purpose is to represent all primary healthcare practitioners in independent private practice.

Although all ASAIPA’s members remain independent, it is essential to be part of a multi-disciplinary group and referral network of practitioners that can coordinate care, and act as a collective in dealing with matters of mutual importance.

The ongoing current nationalization of healthcare, is going to bring even more challenges, and therefore it is now more important than ever to unite around primary care in South Africa.
What is an IPA?

An independent practice association (or IPA) is an association of independent practitioners.

The typical IPA encompasses all specialties, but an IPA can be solely for primary care or may be single specialty.

Practitioners retain their practice’s independent corporate status but become part of a separate organisation with other practices, to enable them to contract as a group to provide services to funders.

Why an IPA?

• Many independent practitioners don’t want to give up control to a larger entity, but want the benefits of a larger organisation.
• Many see an IPA as a tool to protect independence, income and lifestyle.
• Going it alone is becoming increasingly more difficult.
• Participating members have an investment in their own future that can leverage the collective power of all the practices.
• Patients can be recruited / retained by simplifying access for funders and patients.
• Practice costs can be reduced.
• The operating cost for network management can be shared.
• It allows members to set their own standards of care within the framework of funder expectation.
• It can establish the IPA as a “branded” healthcare service.
• And much more...

The History of IPA’s in South Africa

South Africa has excellent primary care professionals, but because of the nature of medical scheme benefit options and associated managed care interventions, many of these skills have been lost. A significant proportion of medical schemes’ spending goes toward managed care organisations, broker fees, specialists and hospitals with only a small portion going to primary care professionals. Therefore, the IPA’s started representing the interests of GPs, particularly in negotiating contracts with schemes and administrators, motivated by but also supported by sound business principles.

The IPA Forum was established in 2007 by ASAIPA in conjunction with the other major IPA Networks and Medscheme. The Forum still exists today, but only cooperates with Medscheme. However, due to a request from Bankmed in 2009, the 3 major IPA Networks (ASAIPA, SP - Net, and SAMCC) founded a non profit company, namely the IPA Foundation, who as a single body represents these 3 networks. GPMG has also since joined the Foundation.
ASAIPA is currently involved in the following projects to deliver primary healthcare solution in South Africa:

Coordinated Care

ASAIPA in conjunction with Connected Care are on a mission to get general practitioners on an IT platform by way of the adoption of the Medinotes software program (developed by a doctor for a doctor) that can be operated on a tablet. As soon as the doctor is operating on an IT platform, integration will take place with all the relevant role players to enable electronic health records and coordinated care.

Networks

ASAIPA and its members are closely involved in various scheme funded networks established to deliver cost effective quality healthcare.

Independent Practitioners Associations

ASAIPA is looking into recruiting students to ensure succession planning in practices, involving allied health professionals in IPAs and promoting specialisation in family and public medicine. ASAIPA is also trying to address malpractice insurance issues, by way of engaging with the insurance industry and profession regulators on accreditation standards and protocols.

Community Oriented Care

ASAIPA is actively seeking involvement in COPC projects to establish the viability of private / public participation as well as to determine the sustainability of an inclusive affordable primary care model. Exploratory talks have already been had with funders, ICT companies, and Universities.

National Healthcare

ASAIPA is of the opinion that national health can be delivered through public health initiatives like COPC, and ASAIPA is ready to be the key role player in mobilizing primary care physicians to be the gate keepers in primary healthcare delivery. Talks have been had with NGO’s that do GP recruiting for the National Department of Health.

Accountable care

ASAIPA has a proven record in working together with the IPA Foundation in managing the cost effective and quality primary care its member doctors are delivering, by way of practice profiling and peer monitoring.
What ASAIPA is:

The Alliance of South African Independent Practitioners Associations (ASAIPA) is a national network of, and representative organisation for South African independent practitioner’s associations (IPA’s).

Currently ASAIPA represents 15 IPA’s with 1120 members at current throughout South Africa, consisting of more or less 1500 independent practitioners in individual and/or group practice.

Where ASAIPA is:

ASAIPA has a national footprint in every province throughout South Africa, with the bulk of its membership being in the interior of the country.

ASAIPA members practice in urban, suburban, township, semi-rural and rural areas, and are all voluntary members of their local IPA’s on an any willing provider basis.

How ASAIPA is constituted:

ASAIPA operates in accordance with its constitution of a voluntary association of members, and is also legally registered as a non-profit organisation.

It may therefore not pay any surpluses to its members, but may only use its income to attain its objectives and service its members.

How ASAIPA is governed:

The membership of the IPA is by the IPA, not the individual. They are members of their IPA’s and IPA Chairpersons, who decides on policy and direction.
The Alliance of South African Independent Practitioners Associations
Represents its constituent Independent Practitioner Associations and their members in a wide variety of fields and endeavours.

General membership benefits
• Relevant member communication
• Broad interaction with the Healthcare Industry
• Contracting with all healthcare stakeholders
• Assistance with healthcare management & governance
• Legal assistance

Value added membership benefits:
• Iemas member cooperative benefits
• Access to Discovery’s complete suite of specialist financial services for professionals
• Access to Connected Care’s robust IT platform in the form of the National-Sign-On initiative Medinotes. and Medimail
• Access to NHC Health Centre’s cash practice model and practice management system
• Access to Health-Soft’s – e-Scripting, e-Pharmacopoeia (Medical and layman's), e-Medical illustration, e-Pill identification, e-Pathology (currently under development), and e-Time.
• Access to Health-Worx’s fee-for-service practice model and practice management system
• Access to Med-EDI – practice management, billing & switching
• Access to practice funding and debt handling solutions
• Access to Healthbridge’s practice and business solutions

Practice resources:
• Assistance with day to day practice management
• Assistance with Continuing Professional Development
• Procurement arrangements
• Information & Communication Technology resources
ASAIPA’s track record:

2013 / 2014

• ASAIPA made strongly worded submissions to the HPCSA on both the fixing of tariffs for General/Family Practitioners as well as the then following proposal for the establishing of a Tariff Committee
• ASAIPA made a detailed thirty-seven-page submission through the IPA Foundation to the Healthcare Inquiry of the Competition Commission on the issues relating to cost and quality of primary healthcare and General / Family Practitioners
• ASAIPA together with Dr. Wessel Neuhoff lodged a class action complaint with the Public Protector on behalf of all General / Family Practitioners that have missed the HPCSA registration process for doctors with the M.Prax.Med, M.Fam.Med or similar qualifications to be able to register as specialist family physicians
• ASAIPA attended the six-week Operation Phakisa Workshop arranged by the Office of the President to fast track the delivery of NHI through the Ideal Clinic initiative and represented the interests of the General / Family Practitioners in private practice during the duration of the discussions

Exclusive Membership Benefits

• Point of care machines at reduced prices, from Ethitech
• Online resources library and online access to the IPA News. Members enjoy exclusive marketing, patient communication, and business services options through NHC.
• Members enjoy exclusive advertising options with the IPA News (Official Media Partner)
• Free Doctors Desk Reference Book - an elegant book for members, containing important and very useful information to use in practice sponsored by Arctic Health
• Pre-approval of products and services indicated by the ASAIPA stamp of approval
• And much much more...
ASAIPA’s track record:

2015

• ASAIPA obtained legal advice and has adopted a commercial model on behalf of its members relating to:
  • Split billing and balance billing
  • Direct payment arrangements
  • Low cost options and prescriptive treatments
  • Protocols and formularies
  • Market dominance and anti-competitive actions
  • Collective bargaining and Cost saving kickbacks / incentives

• ASAIPA listed all its members on the NHC consumer branded platform, making it one of the single largest branded network of General / Family practitioners in South Africa

• ASAIPA has successfully represented members in forensic investigations saving the members thousands of Rands and ensuring that other members will not be held responsible for similar incidents where the medical scheme claws back on all previous claims submitted

• ASAIPA is busy through the IPA Foundation to challenge the BHF, HPCSA & the CMS on the way that they regulate General / Family practitioners that gets paid for treating medical scheme members

• ASAIPA has listed and updated all ASAIPA members on Medpages where they are now geomapped making them much more visible to patients and funders alike

• ASAIPA has membership with human rights and business rights organisations that fight for ASAIPA members' civil and business rights

• ASAIPA is a member of the National dispensing coalition and assists members with dispensing licence matters

• ASAIPA met with the current minister of health, Dr. Aaron Motsoaledi as well as the shadow minister of health for the DA, Dr. Wilmot James, in Nov 2015 to hear the DA's view on the impending NHI. ASAIPA's doors are open with government and the opposition, and although ASAIPA is not politically aligned, we are gathering as much information as we can for our members' interests.

• ASAIPA represents its members on all the major medical schemes and administrators' general practitioner forums

• ASAIPA assisted members with the renewal of dispensing licences, HPCSA registration and PCNS renewals

• ASAIPA is in constant negotiations with stakeholders to open up new earning opportunities for its members
ASAIPA and NHI

- **ASAIPA** attended Operation Phakisa and has inside details on the Ideal Clinic Model
- **ASAIPA** has been engaging with the NDOH on the contracting of private General / Family Practitioner's and has attended all the info sessions
- **ASAIPA** has attended the first work stream meeting and will attend those to follow
- **ASAIPA** has also contributed to submissions made by business rights organisations on the NHI White Paper
- **ASAIPA** has also through the IPA Foundation made submissions to the Health Market Inquiry pertaining to NHI
- **ASAIPA** is working towards bringing its members in line for registration, accreditation and contracting when NHI comes into play
- **ASAIPA** is also actively busy with determining practice cost / profitability and looking at alternative practice models especially a capitated model
- There has been much consideration of the Certificate of Need
- **ASAIPA’s** members are listed in both the consumer space and the medical industry and have been geomapped. Our member base is verified and updated and can be matched to the burden of disease on the District Health Information System

ASAIPA’s track record:

**2016**

- **ASAIPA** has started engaging with Medscheme, Discovery and GEMS on issues affecting **ASAIPA** members since January 2016, and is hard at work in trying to resolve all of them. Some major problems with Bankmed, Polmed and GEMS have been resolved and others are still ongoing
- **ASAIPA** is in the process to do practice cost studies and practice accreditation in preparation for the looming NHI requirements
- **ASAIPA** is still actively engaging on NHI issues
- **ASAIPA** is also looking into the payment of VAT on medical services and the exemption of essential services requirements, and has made a submission through the IPA Foundation to the Health Market Inquiry on this issue
- **ASAIPA** is again looking into recruiting all primary care professionals as members in order to set up multi-disciplinary practices and referral networks
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Absent: Dr Carel Bouwer, & Mrs Antoinette Martin