



## GP's in Danger of Becoming Extinct!

As you will probably be aware, IPAF, in collaboration with PPS, held a series of roadshows under the same title around the country last month to physically draw our doctors' attention to some of the daunting challenges facing our GPs in private practice these days.

Serious threats include pharmacists entering the realms of disease management and treatment, other players dominating tariff decisions, and ongoing indecision in terms of contracting – a particular worry with the proposed National Health Insurance (NHI) looming.

Facilitated by ASAIPA, our working brief to the GPs who attended our Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria workshops where these threats were deliberated at length was loud and clear: know what you are up against as a GP and let's face these challenges as a unified group!

### What have we been talking about?

- The PIMART matter – Pharmacy Council application for Pharmacy-Initiated Management of Antiretroviral Therapy (PIMART) poses a serious threat to general practice – not least because of its implications for other conditions. IPAF is actually taking legal action on this matter.
- **Tariff negotiations** – when last did GPs get a fair deal in terms of tariffs particularly with medical schemes? Probably not since providers and funders were “banned” from negotiating tariffs by the Competition Commission back in 2004. Exacerbating the problem for us since has been the government's failures to regulate tariffs to a point that we now have some schemes imposing their own tariffs! No surprise, therefore, that our slice of the medical income pie has dropped from 8% to less than 5% in the last decade! This must stop!
- **NHI Contracts** – contracts with funders continue to be a massive issue for us and might only be resolved in time if we, as suggested in one of our meetings, are enabled to draw up our own contracts! Possible starting point could be a Medical and Dental Board breakaway from the HPCSA for which provider bodies have been agitating for some years now. Major problem we have right now is that GPs, unlike the pharmacists, don't have a statutory body. This in itself presents a regulatory issue in order to bargain and no doubt when it comes to contracting under NHI.



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Bottom line is that we have no idea as to how many GPs we have in the country and where they are actually practising. Yes, GP groupings such as ourselves do have names and addresses of their GP members, but do we know that they are actually practising from those locations? When it comes to NHI, they are going to have to prove that they are there!



So, our big message to our ASAIPA members from these and the many other concerns raised during the roadshows is that it is imperative for the majority of our GPs to become more aware, more active and more supportive of the attempts to meet the challenges facing us in general practice. If you get a notice or a form to fill in related to any of the points mentioned, please don't ignore it. Please complete it and submit. We need your input for your own and our collective good!

Dr. Unben Pillay  
CEO ASAIPA

