

FOR PSA MEMBERS: *GENERAL 11/2021*

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Nurses' Day 2021: Vision for future healthcare compromised

In South Africa, nurses constitute 56% of all healthcare workers and play an essential role in upholding the healthcare system. At the same time, nurses are expected to perform their duties and render services to communities whilst being pressed by staff shortages and lacking infrastructure.

The International Council of Nurses' theme for Nurses' Day 2021 of "Nurses: A Voice to Lead" with "A Vision for Future Healthcare" as sub-theme does not ring true in South Africa amidst deteriorating circumstances in the nursing profession. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed these realities, whilst claiming the lives of 500 healthcare workers, including nurses. At the start of the pandemic there were problems with supplying personal protective equipment owing to alleged fraud, corruption, and misappropriation of funds. In addition, nurses are notoriously underpaid and are immigrating in search of better opportunities. The fact that almost 48% of nurses will have reached pensionable age in 15 years is alarming.

A crisis is looming in the profession and spells danger for the implementation of Government's National Health Insurance scheme. For this scheme to succeed and serve communities as planned, urgent measures are required to save the nursing profession and attract the youth to the profession. This will, however, be difficult to achieve as Government has failed for two consecutive years to implement wage increases for its employees, which include nurses.

Nurses remain at the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic and will be pillars during the vaccine rollout. On Nurses' Day, the PSA pays tribute to the country's nurses for their dedication and selfless service with the pledge that the Union will continue its efforts to promote and protect their workplace rights and interests.

GENERAL MANAGER