

Medical union urges action on unemployment crisis for doctors

Samatu, the South African Medical Association Trade Union, emphasises a growing crisis in healthcare: unemployment of skilled medical officers after community service.



Source: [Pexels](#)

Current data from its recently conducted survey indicates a distressing figure; more than 800 qualified doctors remain unemployed following the completion of their two years of medical internship and one year of community service.

This disheartening statistic not only signals a loss of valuable medical expertise but also underscores the paradox of understaffed hospitals amidst a surplus of ready-and-willing medical practitioners, the medical union said In a media statement.

"Despite the Department of Health overseeing a rigorous three-year practicum for medical graduates, there is an ironic lack of strategy to keep these skilled doctors on board post training," it said.

"Annually, the department cites budget constraints as a barrier to hiring qualified medical doctors, yet no substantial measures are evident to solve the funding dilemma. This contributes immensely to the web of factors that prompt the continuous emigration of qualified doctors from the country.

"This issue has manifested into an epidemic for the healthcare fraternity, adversely impacting the delivery of quality healthcare services to the nation. South Africans travel long distances and stand in excessively long queues to receive basic healthcare services, while qualified medical practitioners are sitting at home."

The union noted that the Department of Health's inaction in rectifying this issue belies the critical demand for increased medical personnel in public healthcare facilities.



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Advocacy for immediate redress

"As a union staunchly advocating for the rights of doctors, Samatu finds the prevailing status quo unacceptable and exigent of immediate redress. The spectre of unemployment of post-community service doctors not only squanders their accumulated experience, but also symbolises a broader neglect of healthcare priorities.

"It is imperative for the Department of Health to harness the potential of these medical officers to fortify the backbone of our public health services. Swift integration of these professionals into positions where their skills can be utilised is not just expedient, it is an ethical imperative."

Samatu said it demands a decisive plan of action from the Department of Health to bridge this inexplicable employment gap.

"We stand in solidarity with our medical officers, advocating for their rightful place in serving the nation, a role they trained diligently to uphold. As a union, our resolve is steadfast; to champion the cause of our medical professionals and to ensure that the health of our people is not compromised by bureaucratic inertia."

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