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## Media Statement

22 June 2009

For immediate release

### **HPCSA WILL NOT TOLERATE PATIENT NEGLECT DUE TO STRIKING DOCTORS**

“The **Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA)** will not tolerate neglect of patients by striking doctors who by their conduct, are in effect breaking the law” said HPCSA Registrar and CEO Advocate Boyce Mkhize adding, “Those who continue acting in breach of ethical codes of conduct, the Hippocratic Oath as well as labour legislation which prohibits those engaged in essential services such as doctors from striking, will have to bear the consequences of their actions”.

The HPCSA will be closely monitoring the strike action so that the strongest possible and urgent interventions are instituted to deal decisively with striking doctors in order to protect the vulnerable patients whose conditions might complicate as a result of doctors withholding their services.

As a regulatory body with a mandate to guide healthcare practitioners and protect the public, the HPCSA has on several occasions called for urgent mediation between public sector doctors who offer an essential service, and the Department of Health to bring an end to the illegal strike action and maintain the public’s constitutional right to healthcare services.

“We understand and fully acknowledge the critical concerns around the issues of adequate compensation and improved working conditions for public sector doctors and once again make an urgent call to all concerned to find a speedy and amicable resolution to these very genuine concerns. While emphatically denouncing the unprotected and unlawful strike action by doctors, we however call upon representatives of the employer to expedite resolution of this matter to ensure they would not by their own act or omission, inadvertently contribute to an environment where patient care might be compromised”.

“Striking doctors are reminded that they provide an essential service, and as doctors need to conduct themselves in accordance with certain ethical and professional rules, failure of which could lead to suspension or even permanent erasure from the register. Consequently there would be no point in engaging in processes seeking to increase salaries and improve working conditions if doctors cease to be doctors due to them losing their license to practice altogether for participating in an illegal strike,” warned Mkhize.

Instances where striking doctors have neglected patients resulting in complications or loss of life can be reported along with the doctor’s details to the HPCSA at tel: 012 338 9301 or email [legalmed@hpcsa.co.za](mailto:legalmed@hpcsa.co.za) for further investigation.

**Ends**

## **About the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA)**

The Health Professions Council of South Africa is a statutory body established in terms of the Health Professions Act no.56 of 1974 with a mandate to protect the public, all consumers of healthcare, and to provide guidance on educational, professional and ethical issues to its practitioners.

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