

Media Statement

THE PROFESSIONAL BOARD FOR EMERGENCY CARE REMINDS PATIENTS OF THEIR RIGHTS

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For immediate release

Pretoria – The Professional Board for Emergency Care (PBEC) under the ambit of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) continues to uphold its mandate of protecting the public and guiding the professions through **“Promoting quality, equitable and professional people-centered Emergency Care for all.”**

The Board considers Patient’s Rights as an essential socioeconomic right. Section 27 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa guarantees the right to have access to healthcare services and stipulates that no one may be refused emergency medical treatment. Emergency care providers are healthcare providers trained to attend to these emergencies and provide emergency medical care. These emergency care providers may work for either public or private Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

The Board has dealt with various instances in the past, where emergency care providers have been accused of prioritising patients who have been identified to have some form of medical aid/ insurance or alternative form of financial cover for emergency care treatment. In these instances, patients without medical aid/insurance may be ignored by the EMS providers who may or may not have been dispatched to the incident, to provide care. The Board condemns such behaviour as these practices are unethical and unlawful.

However, the public should also note that every patient has a right to refuse treatment and choose to be treated by a particular EMS provider. In other words, no one has the right to engage with a patient without the patient’s consent, let alone start performing medical interventions in the guise of providing assistance.

It should, however, be noted that free emergency medical treatment is not guaranteed, and private healthcare providers and/or healthcare institutions may, after providing such emergency treatment, attempt to recover payment for the services provided.

Every patient has a right to be treated by a clearly identifiable, named healthcare provider. This is to allow for routine interaction and to allow for follow-up on a practitioner's conduct in the case of any queries arising. All emergency care personnel are registered with the HPCSA, and in the case of violating a patient's right/s, a complaint against the health care provider can and should be lodged against the relevant provider.

The Board will continue to educate and create awareness on matters that the Board deems fit to communicate and enrich the public about their rights.

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About the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA)

The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), also known as Council is a statutory body established under the Health Professions Act, 56 of 1974. The HPCSA is committed to protecting the public and guiding the professions. The mission of the HPCSA is quality and equitable healthcare for all.

The HPCSA is mandated to regulate the health professions in the country in aspects of education, training and registration, professional conduct and ethical behaviour, ensuring Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and fostering compliance with healthcare standards.

To safeguard the public and guide the professions, registration in terms of the Act is a prerequisite for practicing any of the health professions registrable with Council.

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Protecting the public and guiding the professions

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