



NHI or Universal Health Coverage

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To most of us the NHI, or Universal Access to healthcare services, seems like an uncharted mountain we must cross, and quite frankly, it is. The fact that pharmacists in other countries have crossed similar mountains, gives us the assurance that it can be done, yet the fact that some failed is a stern warning that it will not be easy and that success is not guaranteed.

I am again taking a quote from the eccentric Afrikaner statesman CJ

Langenhoven who said: **Waar die moeilikheid so groot is as 'n berg, klim die wyse bo-oor, die dwaas graaf 'n tunnel onderdeur en bly binne vassteek; die lafaard draai om.**

Freely translated: **When the challenge is as big as a mountain, the wise will climb over the top, the foolish will try to tunnel underneath and get stuck in the middle, whilst the coward will turn back.**

I think this summarises the attitudes I have seen over the past five years. I have seen those who immediately decided that the mountain ahead is insurmountable and then turned around. They also told all who approached the mountain so and urged them to turn around with them. They had their facts, they had the proof of other countries who failed or who had limited success and with that their decision was made.

We have also seen those who started the tunnels underneath. Some came with spades and sandbags or wheelbarrows. Some came

with monstrous mining machines. We have seen the reports of the heavyweight companies hired to assess the proposed Universal Access plan and we have heard all the doom prophets explaining why it could not be achieved. Whilst most of the reports were based on solid information and reasoning, very few to none offered alternative options to get to the other side of the mountain, i.e. to achieve Universal Access. They got stuck underneath, entrapped by reasons why Universal Access cannot work!

There were also those who started climbing over the mountain, first the foothills, whilst coming to grips with the enormity of the task ahead. Then they started moving slowly up the slopes. Many a time did they come to dead-ends, turned back and scanned the mountain for other possible routes and decided on a way ahead.

As a country and a profession we are not there yet, not by far! We will again encounter dead-ends and crevasses. There will be times when we have to walk on the edge of an abyss and yet we will continue to forge a path for those who will follow.

In this process PSSA, and SAAHIP as a sector, will take the lead for the profession. We cannot afford to fail – for us there is no turning back and we certainly cannot get stuck beneath this mountain!

Whilst there is always somebody to take the lead, it's useless if the rest of the team do not follow, for if the profession does not follow the leaders, who will know that the path was cleared or identify the dangers the road still holds? You have to be part of the process, providing your leaders with safety ropes and with all the support required.

We simply cannot go ahead without you!