

Health Care Measurement in South Africa is Key to a Sustainable Healthcare System

In today's medical landscape, where access and cost determine the quality of healthcare, Health Quality Assessment (HQA), a not for profit and Public Benefit organisation that has a long-term vision to become the leading benchmarking and standard-setting body for clinical quality measurement in South Africa, has been unwavering in its mission to measure, report, and improve the quality of healthcare services in South Africa.

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that everyone should have access to affordable, quality healthcare. This basic human right was also written into the Constitution of South Africa.

Unfortunately, the reality is that millions of South Africans still rely on an overburdened healthcare system that is often beyond their means of access and affordability.

A robust and sustainable healthcare system relies on three fundamental pillars – access, cost, and quality. Although data regarding access and cost has always readily been available, measuring and reporting of clinical quality has been lacking, leaving many unprotected and vulnerable within the system.

Since 2000, HQA has become the leading benchmarking and standard-setting body for clinical quality measurement in South Africa in a bid to protect the rights of healthcare consumers and to contribute towards a sustainable healthcare system. At its annual conference in 2024, HQA will be reporting on healthcare quality for the 20th year in succession, on a dataset representing 84% of all medical scheme members in South Africa.

HQA's constitution offers membership to any healthcare organisation, and its Board of Directors is representative of medical schemes, hospitals, doctors, and administrators.

“We realised early on that there was a massive gap in the healthcare system that required attention,” says Louis Botha, HQA CEO. “We believe that every patient deserves access to quality healthcare and by partnering with medical schemes, hospitals, doctors, and other healthcare organisations, we can identify areas for measurement and jointly develop appropriate health quality indicators. The recipients of HQA's reports develop strategies to enhance the quality of healthcare provided to scheme members and/or patients. HQA's strength lies in its rich and diverse membership and effective collaboration, its experience and capability to collect, store and analyse large data sets across multiple platforms, and its ability to report complex results in a user friendly and in a no blaming, no shaming way.”

Since its inception HQA has followed a collaborative approach and encouraged voluntary participation in a safe environment, underpinned by strict data security and confidential reporting. Unlike individual medical schemes, administrators or other healthcare organisations that rely on their own data, HQA can generate national benchmarks based on well established, evidence-based healthcare quality indicators. Through HQA, schemes can benchmark their performance against their previous year's results as well as against other participating non-identifiable schemes. As a result, the performance of clinical quality indicators is improving steadily year after year.

For patients, partnering with schemes, hospitals and doctors that work with HQA provides peace of mind knowing that their care is being monitored and evaluated by an independent, trusted authority. It ensures transparency and accountability in the delivery of healthcare services, empowering patients to advocate for their own health and well-being.

As HQA continues its mission to advance healthcare quality in South Africa, it remains dedicated to collaborating with schemes, hospitals, doctors, and patients to drive meaningful change. “In an ever-changing healthcare system it is more important than ever that we are able to provide this kind of healthcare quality assurance in the most responsible way,” continues Botha.

“We continuously collect data from, and report on healthcare quality to several leading South African medical schemes including Bankmed Medical Scheme, Bonitas Medical Fund, CAMAF, Discovery Health Medical Scheme, Engen Medical Benefit Fund, GEMS, LA Health, Medihelp, Netcare Medical Scheme, Old Mutual Staff Medical Aid, Polmed, Profmed, Remedi Medical Aid Scheme, SAB Medical Aid Scheme, Sizwe-Hosmed Medical Fund, Thebemed, Transmed Medical Fund and Wooltru Healthcare Fund. HQA is also supported by several large healthcare member organisations in developing and reviewing its health quality indicators: Aspen Pharmacare, BHF, CDE, Discovery Health, IPA Foundation, Johnson&Johnson Medical, Joint-Care Inc, Lenmed, Life Healthcare, LifeSense Disease Management, Momentum Health Solutions, Mediclinic, Mediscor, Medipost, Medscheme, MSD, PPSHA, SAMA, SAPPF, 3SixtyHealth, Universal Care and Workability.”

Looking to the future, HQA is committed to continue developing healthcare quality standards and benchmarks for as many role players in the South African health care industry as possible. It has embarked on an ambitious path to draw in more players in both the private and public sector and continues to strive to be a well governed and sustainable going concern serving the interests of all in the country. New developments include reporting to doctors and hospitals, and patient reporting outcomes.

“We want medical scheme members and patients to feel confident in the care they receive which is why we are intent on advancing healthcare quality in South Africa through collaborating with medical schemes, hospitals, doctors, and patients to drive meaningful change. By partnering with healthcare facilities and doctors that are committed to healthcare quality improvement, patients can trust that they are receiving safe, effective, and compassionate care in a healthcare system that prioritises the needs and rights of patients above all else.” concludes Botha.

For more information about Health Quality Assessment visit <https://www.hqa.co.za/> or contact Botha at lj.botha@iafrica.com