

Culturally Competent Healthcare – a Moral Compass to Business Leaders in South Africa

The King 3 Report requires Directors of Companies to address the health and wellbeing of their employees. A mere choice of a medical scheme or just a change in the participation or subsidy policy will no longer be sufficient.

This is the view of Andre Jacobs, Business Unit Head for Aon Healthcare National Operations. Jacobs says the quest for sustainable healthcare solutions does not lie in bargain shopping for cheaper medical scheme products or a mere price and benefit comparison. “In seeking sustainable solutions Directors of Companies will find value in plans that improve employee health and medical scheme utilisation efficiency by eliminating disparities in healthcare,” says Jacobs. He says disparities in healthcare can be attributed to a range of factors such as structural or systemic sources as well as the cultural lens through which the individual views his or her health and interactions with medical providers. These disparities exist in both the insured and the uninsured market.

Jacobs says Culturally Competent Healthcare (“CCH”) is a concept that can be used to describe a refreshing approach to healthcare that offers all participants equal access, opportunity, quality care and medical purchasing efficiency by eliminating structural barriers and respect for the cultural context of each

individual. The cultural context includes factors such as race, language, age, gender, lifestyle, faith, location, and socio-economic status. All these cultural factors influence the individual's decisions relating to their health and medical care.

“The adoption of CCH by forward-thinking employers and medical scheme providers will serve as a prism to look through to better promote employee health and medical purchasing efficiency in an increasingly multicultural society,” says Jacobs. He says CCH provides employers with an opportunity to improve quality of care, reduce short- and long-term medical costs and also improve productivity. It commits stakeholders to addressing diversity goals which support a powerful social justice argument to provide all employees with equal access and opportunity to receive quality and efficient care. In effect, it provides the framework solution for providing Universal Health Care for South African citizens.

“Employers who embrace CCH and who are willing to demonstrate leadership in improving employee health stand to gain a competitive advantage as an employer of choice,” concludes Jacobs.

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PUBLIC RELATIONS ON (011) 463-6372 OR CONTACT CATHY JACKSON ON
CATHY@FINDLEYPR.CO.ZA