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1 February 2020

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT BY THE CMS, BHF, HFA AND NON-AFFILIATED MEDICAL SCHEMES ON THE ACQUISITION AND ROLLOUT OF THE COVID-19 VACCINE

Close collaboration between the public and private sectors is a key ingredient for the successful implementation of the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Council for Medical Schemes (CMS), together with industry representative bodies the Board of Healthcare Funders (BHF), the Health Funders Association (HFA) and non-affiliated medical schemes (the Funders Working Group), have come together to support efforts to provide broader health coverage through effective management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Accordingly, the Funders Working Group wishes to assure members unequivocally that their medical scheme contributions are safe and will be utilised for their benefit in the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Medical scheme funds are safeguarded by stringent legislation through the Medical Schemes Act (131 of 1998) which empowers trustees who govern medical schemes to act in the best interests of members.

The CMS is co-ordinating this public-private sector collaboration aimed at ensuring that there is universal access to this vaccine in line with the country's priorities and individual health needs.

As such, this working group is providing input to the National Department of Health's vaccine access framework. These contributions include regulatory concerns; logistics of distribution and administration; clinical protocols and guidelines; information and record-keeping; funding options; and the central co-ordination and leadership function.

The funding industry is engaging closely with the CMS to ensure scheme sustainability. These efforts are aimed at achieving the 67% herd immunity of the population to restore the economy and stabilise the country.

The COVID-19 vaccine is a prescribed minimum benefit (PMB), in other words, the vaccine will be paid for by schemes from risk according to national guidelines.

The Funders Working Group wishes to assure its stakeholders and members that it will continue to work constructively with all relevant stakeholders in the best interests of both members and the national outcomes.

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