# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 761**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 10 MARCH 2023**

**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 08)**

**Mrs M O Clarke (DA) to ask the Minister of Health:**

(1) With reference to his reply to question 2091 on 17 June 2022, and given the vacancy rate of 27 137 doctors, nurses and Emergency Medical Services personnel in the Republic, (a) what are the main reasons for the massive number of vacancies, especially nurses, (b) what steps have been taken by his department to fill the specified positions, (c) in which provinces will the positions be filled and (d) what total number of each position will be filled;

(2) what (a) are the reasons that medical students are still struggling to be placed into internships, given the specified vacancies and (b) practical solutions and/or plans will be put in place to ensure that no one is left behind;

(3) what (a) are the reasons that intern doctors are still struggling to be placed into community service, given the vacancies and (b) practical solutions and/or plans will be put in place to ensure that no one is left behind;

(4) given the total number of foreign medical personnel employed in the Republic, what are the reasons that South African medical personnel who qualified and trained in foreign countries are struggling to obtain accreditation from the Health Professions Council of South Africa? **NW860E**

**REPLY:**

1. The response to parliamentary question 2091 that which was provided on 17 June 2022 indicated a total vacancy posts of 27 137 for doctors, nurses and emergency medical services personnel in the Republic. As of 28 February 2023, there were 18 804 vacant posts of doctors, nurses and medical care personnel. This demonstrates a 31% achievement rate in the filling of vacant posts.
	1. The main reason for the recorded vacant posts is general budget cuts introduced by National Treasury. These cuts also affect Compensation of Employment (CoE) negatively resulting in not all posts being filled simultaneously.
	2. As demonstrated above in order to reduce the vacancy rate by 31%, the Department introduced several interventions which amongst others, include:
		1. Prioritisation of the posts in the Annual Recruitment Plan – where funding permits;
		2. Prioritisation of the posts for conditional grant funding;
		3. Filling of replacement posts considered and approved weekly;
		4. Advertisements published National wide through print media.
	3. Filling of these vacant posts will be prioritised in all provinces as per above method to ensure that there is no over expenditure of Compensation of Employment (CoE).
	4. Posts are prioritised according to the availability of funding and the Annual Recruitment Plan as informed by the service delivery model.
2. (a) The Department working together with Provincial Departments of Health and National Treasury has put in place mechanisms to ensure that all eligible South African Citizens and Permanent Residents are allocated to accredited medical internship positions within the Cycle that applicants qualify for. This is evident by the conclusion of allocating 2 505 medical interns applicants in the January Annual Cycle 2023.

Only 55 applicants are still to be allocated as they were not eligible due to various reasons e.g., applicants declining the posts and preferring to wait for the next cycle.

(b) All eligible applicants will again be given an opportunity during the Midyear Cycle which will start on the 1 July 2023.

1. (a) The Department working together with Provincial Departments of Health and National Treasury has put in place methods to ensure that all eligible South African Citizens and Permanent Residents are allocated to medical community service positions within the Cycle applicants qualify in. This is evident by the conclusion of allocating 2 509 medical community service applicants in the January Annual Cycle 2023.

(b) All other eligible applicants, who met the allocation requirements later, will again be given an opportunity during the Midyear Cycle which will start on the 1 July 2023.

(4)   Registration of foreign qualified medical applicants with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) is a multi-layered process. The HPCSA has to satisfy itself that applicants studied in legally recognized Institutions, by both the health and regulatory authorities of the countries of training. Applicants are required to submit several documents that will assist the HPCSA to establish their competency, including the hours that they would have spent in training and the domain training completed. As most of them study in non-English speaking countries, for example China, Russia and Turkey, documents have to be translated into English and notarized before the HPCSA  can submit them to relevant committees of the board to make a determination about the equivalence of their training to that provided in South Africa. Any delays in one of the steps in this process ordinarily lengths the processing of applications.

END.