

# SAMA MEDIA STATEMENT



## SAMA CONDEMNS ALARMING NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED JUNIOR DOCTORS

07 January 2025

The South African Medical Association (SAMA) is deeply concerned about the alarming number of junior doctors who remain unemployed despite completing their community service, with over 1800 doctors reported to be affected nationwide. The latest development in the Eastern Cape is one example, where the Provincial Department of Health released a circular (**Departmental Circular No: 31 / 2024**) stating that it cannot provide employment for doctors who have completed their community service. This is a glaring reminder of the crisis facing the healthcare system in general, especially in a province that admits struggling with a shortage of doctors.

SAMA finds it unacceptable that our country is unable to provide employment opportunities for these dedicated and highly skilled professionals, and more so for services that are critically needed by our communities. The consequences of this situation are far-reaching and have significant implications for the delivery of healthcare services. The unemployment of junior doctors not only affects the individuals themselves but also has a ripple effect on the entire healthcare system. It exacerbates the existing shortage of medical personnel, leading to overworked and burnt-out healthcare professionals. This, in turn, compromises the quality of care provided to patients and puts a strain on the already overburdened healthcare system.

To better understand the scope of the crisis, SAMA is launching a nationwide survey to gather data on the allocation and filling of vacancies in hospitals across South Africa. We urge all doctors and hospitals to participate in this survey by clicking [HERE](#). The survey will provide valuable insights into the number of posts allocated and filled in each hospital, allowing the organisation to better understand the extent of the crisis and its impact on healthcare services delivery. For example, at Groote Schuur Hospital, SAMA was informed that the number of intern posts had decreased dramatically over the past few years, from 120 in 2022 to a shocking 34 in 2025. This is a stark reminder of the devastating impact of the crisis on junior doctors and the healthcare system.

SAMA urges all healthcare professionals and hospitals to participate in this survey and to provide accurate information on the allocation and filling of vacancies. By doing so, we can work together to address this crisis and ensure that our healthcare system is adequately staffed and equipped to provide quality care to our citizens.

SAMA is calling on the government to:

1. Provide immediate employment opportunities for junior doctors who have completed their community service.
2. Increase funding for healthcare services to address the shortage of medical personnel.
3. Develop a comprehensive plan to address the root causes of the crisis and ensure that our healthcare system is sustainable and equitable.

We cannot afford to continue neglecting the healthcare needs of our citizens and if the unemployment of junior doctors is not resolved in earnest, SAMA will consider taking legal action. It is time for the government to take decisive action to address this crisis and ensure that our healthcare system can provide the quality care that our people deserve.

(ENDS)

#### **Notes to Editors**

About SAMA: The South African Medical Association (“SAMA”) was established in 1927 and became known as it is today through the unification of a variety of doctors’ groups on 21 May 1998 that had represented a diversity of interests. SAMA is a non-statutory, professional association for public and private sector medical practitioners. SAMA is registered a non-profit company in terms of the Companies Act. SAMA is a voluntary membership association, existing to serve the best interests and needs of its members in all healthcare-related matters.

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