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### **HOSPITAL SUPPLY AND MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA: POLICY DIRECTIONS AND CHALLENGES**

Apartheid's consequences for the South African health system and health care included the creation of a highly inequitable and discriminatory system – based on race, class, geographic area – with differential access, quantity and quality of health services for the wealthy and deprived. The policy directions and reforms of the post-apartheid dispensation have centred on increasing access to health care for all citizens based on the principle that “[p]ublic services are not a privilege in a civilised and democratic society; they are a legitimate expectation”. Nonetheless, stark provincial, rural-urban and private/public inequalities continue to characterise the distribution and numbers of hospitals and beds. All three inequality dimensions are exacerbated by exodus of HRH: from public to private and NGO hospitals, to richer/better resourced provinces and to other countries. In the case of medical practitioners, specialists and pharmacists the increase in numbers since 1994 have been substantially lower than the population increase, and in the case of nurses just matched it. However, the absolute numbers of health professionals and available funding are not the central problems of the South African health system, but rather the vast inefficiencies in management and a divided health care system, with ever-more obvious distinctions between the public and private sectors in terms of access and quality. If the current policy direction towards national health insurance is to be successful, more equitable sharing of resources between the public and private sectors, major initiatives in management skills development – especially in public hospitals – and public-private partnerships in the provision of hospital services are required.

#### **Biography**

HCJ (Dingie) van Rensburg is emeritus professor and professor extraordinaire at the University of the Free State, South Africa. During his career he was the head of the Department of Sociology, and later founder and first director of the Centre for Health Systems Research & Development at the same university. His main area of specialisation is the Sociology of Health and Health Care with focus on health systems and policy, with special focus on the history, structure and dynamics of the South African health system. His best known academic publication is Health and Health Care in South Africa, in collaboration with several South African experts in the field. He holds an honorary doctorate from the Antwerp University (Belgium) in recognition for his research contributions on the social aspects of HIV/AIDS.

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