

# SAMA MEDIA STATEMENT



## URGENT ATTENTION NEEDED TO ADDRESS UNREACHABLE HEALTH FACILITIES DUE TO TELKOM BILL CRISIS

Pretoria, 22 March 2024

The South African Medical Association (SAMA) urgently behoves on the Gauteng Department of Health to address the concerning issue of unreachable health facilities within the Gauteng province, a result of the unpaid Telkom bill. This matter has led to significant disruptions in communication, affecting critical services in numerous healthcare institutions.

It is deeply troubling to note that essential facilities such as Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital, Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital, and Steve Biko Academic Hospital, among others, have been impacted by this crisis. These institutions are vital pillars of healthcare delivery in Gauteng, serving countless patients in need.

The inability to settle the Telkom bill has resulted in disrupted telephone lines, rendering these facilities practically unreachable. Such a situation not only hampers day-to-day operations but also poses severe risks to patient care and safety. Reports indicating poor ambulance response times and reduced child immunization rates underscore the far-reaching consequences of this crisis.

SAMA emphasises that strengthening the healthcare system begins with ensuring the functionality of healthcare facilities. Every delay in addressing these issues directly impacts the well-being of our communities, particularly the most vulnerable among us.

We call upon the Gauteng Department of Health to swiftly resolve the unpaid telephone bill matter and ensure the restoration of essential services in all affected healthcare facilities. Moreover, there is an urgent need to implement robust measures to prevent similar crises from arising in the future.

As advocates for patient-centred care and the well-being of healthcare professionals, SAMA remains committed to collaborating with all stakeholders to address systemic challenges and uphold the highest standards of healthcare delivery across South Africa.

(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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