

The 3 prevalent influencers in healthcare in 2021

By [Paul Cox](#)

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While no one could have predicted the way 2020 turned out, its impact will continue to be felt long into 2021, especially in the health space for obvious reasons.



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1. Public private partnerships and NHI implementation

The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the urgency for the implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI) to ensure all South Africans have access to quality healthcare. As a result, health minister Dr Zweli Mkhize has entered into a performance agreement with President Cyril Ramaphosa which outlines that at least 90% of South Africans should have access to universal health coverage by 2030.

Now, government will start progressively implementing the NHI. As part of this process, the first milestone to be achieved will be the establishment of the NHI Fund as a public entity which must be operational by 2021/2022. Although the country has finally exited its longest recession in 28 years with the economy expanding by 13.5% from the previous quarter, it's going to have to pick up a lot more in order to fund the NHI. With this in mind, the president has acknowledged that the incorporation of the private sector will be critical to the rollout of the NHI. I believe then that public-private partnerships will gather momentum in the new year as government strives to meet its rollout targets.

2. Covid-19 vaccine distribution

With South Africa expecting to receive its first batch of Covid-19 vaccines from the Covax global vaccine distribution scheme in the next two months the country's largest pharmaceutical retailer is now in talks with government to help distribute these once they become available. Again, I believe that public private partnerships will be crucial for ensuring that more people are inoculated and in a shorter time frame.

3. Telemedicine is here to stay

The pandemic has seen telemedicine surge. With South Africans embracing social distancing, consulting a healthcare provider over the phone, or via video has become the new normal for many non-urgent medical needs. With Covid-19 set to still be with us for the foreseeable future, telemedicine has to remain the primary method for consulting safely. As the virus

is credited with accelerating innovation in patient engagement and expanding technologies in healthcare, I anticipate further advances in this space.

While we might see additional trends come to light, I believe that these three will be the most prevalent for South Africans in the new year.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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