

Mediclinic Southern Africa stands firm on its policy of mandatory workplace vaccination



By [Katja Hamilton](#)

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Private hospital group, Mediclinic Southern Africa has slammed commentary making rounds on social media that it has reversed its stance on its mandatory workplace vaccination policy.



Source: [Pxabay](#)

Mediclinic Southern Africa introduced Covid-19 vaccination policies for staff and service providers in October last year, joining a steadily growing number of JSE-listed companies that have followed the lead of life and health insurer Discovery.

In a media statement Mediclinic Southern Africa said: "As one of the leading healthcare providers in South Africa, Mediclinic Southern Africa has made a firm decision to implement a mandatory Covid-19 vaccination policy for those working in Mediclinic facilities. The policy aims to create a safe and positive working environment for our employees, associated doctors and health-care professionals, and other service providers when serving our patients."

Following engagement with internal audiences, Mediclinic Southern Africa went on to say it made the decision in December 2021 to extend the consultation phase of the phased implementation approach of its Covid-19 vaccination policies for staff.

Final activation date moved to April

Mediclinic Southern Africa has since moved the final activation date from 1 February 2022 to 1 April 2022 for staff and vendors, while doctors working in Mediclinic facilities will have to be vaccinated by 1 June 2022.

"The exemption application deadlines have been extended in accordance to allow a fair and proper process," Mediclinic Southern Africa said. "The phased implementation of the mandatory vaccination policy includes a comprehensive engagement plan that kicked off on 1 October 2021 with the implementation of the policy. This engagement has now been extended, and more consultation is being conducted.

"The extension has allowed further engagement opportunities and also enables more staff and internal stakeholders to be vaccinated before the new mandatory compliance date of 1 April 2022. Contrary to current allegations on social media, this policy has not been withdrawn as we remain committed to providing the safest possible working environment for all stakeholders."

Lawyer and human rights activist speaks out

But lawyer and human rights activist, Schalk van der Merwe - who filed papers at Constitutional Court against the SA president and Cabinet over mandatory workplace vaccinations - is [reported](#) as saying Mediclinic and other companies such as gold and platinum mine, Sibanye-Stillwater, have "suspended their mandatory workplace vaccinations until April 2".

He said that in the coming two to three months "the average worker [who does not give consent to having a Covid-19 vaccination or subsequent booster shots] will no longer be threatened by mandatory workplace vaccination policy".

"This means nothing is finalised and you can go to your workplace [if you have not been vaccinated]]. By April 2 the mandatory workplace vaccination policies will not only be suspended but called off," he said.

"The reason is that the State is winding down on the whole issue of Covid."

He did not elaborate on what specifically this referred to, but did say "South Africa is six weeks behind Britain".

The United Kingdom last week lifted its restrictions on mask wearing, Covid passes and stay-at-home advice.

No national policy on mandatory workplace vaccinations

Whether this will translate into government lifting some of South Africa's Covid-19 restrictions in six weeks time, or as a complete lifting of the State of Disaster by April 2, remains to be seen.

Furthermore, the government's stance on mandatory workplace vaccinations remains stymied.

"I can't see how these mandatory workplace vaccinations that have been "suspended" will ever come to fruition," Schalk said.

Last week Premier of the Western Cape, Alan Winde said President Cyril Ramaphosa had "failed to clearly outline a roadmap going forward" with regards to the National State of Disaster.



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This was Winde's statement to the public following his attendance of the launch of [Africa's Access to Advanced Healthcare \(AAAH\) Coalition](#) with SA President, Cyril Ramaphosa. "[The President noted] only that this would be considered by the

National Coronavirus Command Council. This is despite the fact that our exit from the fourth wave is now imminent."

Winde said he has been calling on National Government to "guide us out of the National State of Disaster, since October last year".

Mediclinic's engagement with internal stakeholders

Mediclinic backed its mandatory workplace policy, saying: "The extension of the consultation phase around our policy comes as a sincere leadership response to hearing the needs expressed by internal stakeholders and the genuine desire to support employees and stakeholders on their vaccination journey.

"Mediclinic wants to ensure that all internal stakeholders have had the opportunity to engage and have had access to all the relevant information to make an informed decision regarding Covid-19 vaccination.

"Mediclinic views this policy as a critical step for all individuals working in our company and our subsidiaries, whether they work in a hospital, corporative office or ambulance service. As a responsible employer, information that Mediclinic collects, stores and disposes of, as the case may be, will always be managed in line with the provisions of the POPIA."

Independent of Mediclinic, Van der Merwe said he now deals with many Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration-related [cases](#) of workers who have been fired due to not complying with mandatory workplace vaccinations, or who have since experienced adverse effects from the Covid-19 vaccine after having been mandated by their workplaces to do so.

In the meantime, Mediclinic said it has already provided employees and other stakeholders with vaccination-related education, counselling and logistic enablement.

"Throughout the engagement to date, the opportunity was provided to consult with clinical experts, health professionals, and Mediclinic human-resources practitioners to alleviate concerns and have a clear picture of the matters at hand," it said.

ABOUT KATJA HAMILTON

Katja is the Finance, Property and Healthcare Editor at Bizcommunity.

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