



Bold about healthcare reform

Description

Industry Leaders converged in May for the 24th Annual BHF Conference, themed Uniting Parallels Collaborating for Value Partnerships, Transforming the Future of Healthcare

The 24th Annual Board of Healthcare Funders (BHF) Conference, held from 10 – 14 May 2025, brought together the continent's foremost healthcare minds, policymakers, academics, and innovators to engage in critical discussions on the future of healthcare in South Africa and across the African continent.

AfroCentric, a proud platinum sponsor of the conference, once again played a participatory and facilitator role in shaping these conversations, reinforcing commitment to advancing accessible, affordable, and quality healthcare for all Africans.

The opening ceremony of the Conference convened a formidable lineup of leaders whose thought-provoking addresses collectively set the tone for the week's deliberations. Each speaker offered a compelling perspective on the urgent and complex task of reforming South Africa's healthcare system. Neo Khauoe, Principal Officer of POLMED and Chairperson of the BHF, opened the proceedings with a warm welcome, urging delegates to fully engage with the week's content and embrace the lessons shared as a catalyst for genuine transformation in the sector.



Data-led decisions

In a presentation titled “The Grand Experiment: Lessons from the GNU”, Dr Pali Lehohla, Board member: Institute for Economic Justice and former Statistician-General of South Africa, called for a return to data-led decision-making in healthcare policy. He underscored that sustainable reform must be anchored in evidence and demographic insight. Drawing from historical figures to illustrate the power of principled leadership, he referenced mentor Morena Mohlomi’s model of responsible leadership, Florence Nightingale’s use of statistics to save lives, Marie Curie’s belief that “nothing in life

is to be feared, it is only to be understood”, and Alexander the Great’s final wishes as a call to act boldly and urgently in the present. Professor Lehohla additionally emphasised that quality education is the conduit with which to drive this transformation in healthcare.



Bridging divides

Professor Bonang Mohale, Chancellor of the University of the Free State and esteemed business leader, delivered a rousing address under the theme “Uniting Parallels: Bridging Divides to Transform Healthcare”. He made a strong case for aligning healthcare reform with economic development, job creation, and ethical, patriotic leadership. Mohale shared sobering statistics – 40% of South Africans spend most of their income on transport, another 40% are employed but uninsured, and nine million people pay out-of-pocket for healthcare – to underscore the systemic inequalities that must be

addressed to ensure access for all.



AI transforms healthcare

Adding a cutting-edge dimension, Dr Adam Pantanowitz, a globally recognised biomedical and electrical engineer, delivered a session titled “The AI Revolution”. He highlighted how artificial intelligence is transforming healthcare, highlighting Brainternet – a groundbreaking, world-first project he conceptualised and supervised. Brainternet connects the human brain to the internet in real-time, converting electroencephalogram (EEG) signals into an open-source brainwave livestream.

Using commercially available devices, the project enables machine learning to classify user movement and decode neural activity. Dr Pantanowitz demonstrated how such innovations can revolutionise diagnostics, rehabilitation, and patient monitoring – cementing South Africa’s place on the global health-

tech map.



The power of collaboration

A common thread running through all the addresses was the urgent need for deeper collaboration between the public and private sectors. Speakers repeatedly emphasised that partnerships – between insurers, healthcare providers, policymakers, innovators, and academia – are critical to building a more inclusive, efficient, and resilient healthcare system. This opening session laid the intellectual and strategic foundation for the rest of the conference, setting the stage for deeper discussions on universal health coverage, funding reforms, governance, data-driven transformation, and the power of

industry collaboration.

Subsequent plenary sessions expanded on these themes, questioning whether current healthcare partnerships – both locally and globally – are achieving meaningful transformation. These conversations gained even more relevance in light of shifting donor landscapes, such as the impact of the PEPFAR funding freeze.

Some of these sessions were facilitated by our leaders, including:

- Dr Nkateko Msimeki, General Manager: Health Policy & Medical Advisory at Medscheme, who facilitated a key session on benefit design and the social determinants of health.
- Dr Tumi Mahlangu, Dental Advisor at DENIS, was a featured speaker, sharing her perspectives on the role of Tele-Dentistry in advancing oral healthcare access across Africa.

The evolving role of health insurers also came under the spotlight, with strong calls for them to shift from passive funders to active partners, leveraging data, innovation, and local models to co-create a sustainable future for healthcare.

Titanium Awards

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A highlight of the BHF Conference was the prestigious Titanium Awards, honouring excellence in healthcare initiatives. AfroCentric was proud to invest in the Young Achiever Award Category as a sponsor because we believe in empowering the next generation of healthcare leaders.



A huge congratulations to all the winners of the 2025 Titanium Awards. Worth noting, Bonitas won an award for Best Service to Membership: Open, Closed & Self-Administered Medical Schemes, Administrators and Managed Care Organizations under Category B: Operational Performance, while GEMS walked away with the Best Annual Integrated Report: Health Funders/Medical Schemes award!



Deepening strategic partnerships

The annual client dinner is an opportunity for networking, mingling, and entertaining our clients, potential clients, and important stakeholders.

AfroCentric Chairperson Dr Anna Mokgokong delivered a stirring keynote address, reaffirming the group's dedication to driving transformation across the healthcare value chain. Group CEO Gerald Van Wyk echoed this sentiment, emphasising the need for collaborative approaches that place members'

needs at the centre of every intervention. Other attendees included AfroCentric director of social and Ethics Committee and board member, Dr Nkateko Munisi, Sanlam Corporate CEO Khanyisa Mkhize, the Group Exco and conference delegates from AfroCentric; as well as external guests and clients, including principal officers, fund managers, and trustees.







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Category

- 1. Our Business