

STATEMENT  
BY  
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to the Evidence Leaders  
of the  
Market Inquiry into the Private Healthcare Sector

On or around 15 June 2015 I visited the Netcare Private Hospital, Linksfield Park, with a complaint of shortness of breath and intermittent irregular pulse. I suffer from mild hypertension and have been on treatment for several years. I was concerned over my health and decided that I will have my complaint investigated.

I visited the Outpatient Department and was seen by a medical doctor who decided to have an electrocardiograph (ECG) taken. After the technician had completed the ECG, the doctor had a look at it and left the room. I was not given any explanation.

The doctor returned after about 10 – 15 minutes and informed me that the cardiologist [redacted] was waiting for me in his consulting rooms. Dr [redacted] is a cardiologist linked to the Netcare Linksfield Park Hospital. He has his consulting rooms in the hospital complex.

I was alarmed about the decision to refer me straight to the cardiologist. Upon arrival in his consulting rooms, the cardiologist commenced with obtaining a medical history from me. He then repeated the ECG (the one which the Outpatient Department had done was not given to him). He then continued to do a variety of additional examinations including a transthoracic echocardiogram.

I was in his consulting rooms for just over an hour. Upon completion of the examinations, Dr [redacted] informed me that he would like to change the medication which I use for my hypertension. He then provided me with a prescription and upon greeting me said: "Please remember to settle your account before leaving the building".

What a shock! I was not informed that I would be seeing the cardiologist separately from my admission to the Outpatient Department. I was not informed that the cardiologist was not contracted to any Medical Aid. I was not informed that I will have to pay cash for my visit to the cardiologist and then claim the payment back from my Medical Aid.

The amount which I had to pay was in excess of R4 000!

I usually get paid on the 20<sup>th</sup> of every month. It was only a few days before pay day and I did not have that amount of money available in my banking account. I had to request permission from the doctor to go and request my bank manager to provide me with an advance (loan) till pay day so that I could pay the cardiologist. I was really embarrassed!

I wish to tell you my story because:

- I was not provided with any information about my ECG results by the staff in the Outpatient Department
- I got the fright of my life when I was informed that the cardiologist was waiting for me!  
– I was not sure what lay ahead – admission to hospital? – was I close to possibly

getting a heart attack? – did I require a pacemaker? – etc. The experience caused me a lot of stress and anxiety.

- The staff failed to explain to me that, even though, the cardiologist was linked to the hospital, I would see him separate to my consultation with the hospital and would have to pay him immediately for the consultation
- I was embarrassed to say to the doctor's receptionist that I do not have that amount of money in my account and to request to go to my bank manager to request a loan
- Eventually my Medical Aid had to pay for the Outpatient visit (including the ECG)
- My Medical Aid then had to pay (again) for the repeat ECG done by the cardiologist as well as the rest of the procedures and consultation

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