

Sama sets record straight on accusations

The accusations made in the *Witness* newspaper [article](#) that chairperson of the South African Medical Association (Sama), Dr Mzukisi Grootboom, and by association the organisation, has been 'silent' and 'had not been taking the fight to the department' on various issues that affect its members employed by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health (DoH) 'since Grootboom's company, Joint Medical Holdings (JMH), has a contract with the department', have been refuted by both.



Dr Mzukisi Grootboom, chair of the South African Medical Association. Photo: *Citizen*

The inference of the article is that Grootboom, and Sama are not doing enough to deal with problems in healthcare in KwaZulu-Natal as he and his company have a vested interest in providing oncology services to the provincial department of health, a statement from Sama said.

“These inferences were apparently drawn following comments from some unions, and some doctors, working in KwaZulu-Natal. These allegations are spurious, and do not reflect the truth as it played out in reality.”

The statement said that JMH has contract with the KZN DoH, and that Grootboom has been a director of this company, an independent private hospital group based in Durban, since 2005. But that his involvement with JMH predates his involvement with Sama by some time.

Not involved in negotiations

“It must also be noted that Grootboom has never been involved in any negotiations with the KZN DoH on his own, or as part of JMH, to provide oncology or other services through JMH.

"The JMH board was fully appraised of Grootboom's position as Sama chairperson, and the matter was thoroughly considered by the JMH board prior to deciding to assist patients without access to oncology services, after they were made aware of the oncology crisis in the public sector hospitals in the province.

"This was done through funding the salaries of five private oncologists to assist at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli Hospital as part of its corporate social investment (CSI) initiative. R4m was budgetted for this purpose.

"A further request was made by the department for JMH to provide oncology services in the Ngwelezane/Richards Bay area. This project has no relation to Sama's interaction with the KZN DoH nor has Grootboom on his own, or as part of a JMH delegation, been involved in any discussions about the provision of oncology services. As reported by the JMH board, the company was requested to assist another area of the province, and the company assigned its senior managers to negotiate the terms of that engagement."

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