

No community service posts for pharmacists

There is a lack of state posts for pharmacists to complete their year of community service, forcing them into unemployment, according to the Pharmaceutical Society of SA.



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The society said Monday, 9 January 2017, that if the government could not afford to offer pharmacists community service posts, it had no legal or moral basis to enforce community service and it should end the practice.

Pharmacists cannot work in either the private or state sector until they have completed a legally required year of community service, usually in understaffed state hospitals or rural parts of the country.

Pharmaceutical society member Lorraine Osman said that of the 984 who were supposed to start work at the beginning of the year, at least 78 did not have jobs.

There might be as many as 129 newly qualified pharmacists who were supposed to start work this year and were without jobs.

"Although the national Department of Health was notified of the number of interns who would need placement, provinces

found that there was insufficient funding for them to offer the necessary posts."

Society president Professor Sarel Malan said: "If there are insufficient posts in the public service, the only tenable option is to remove the obligation for community service immediately, and to allow all completing interns to be registered without limitation and to practise in any setting."

Osman said that while there were problems placing staff every year in community service posts, far more were out of work this year, which had forced the society to publicise the issue.

In 2000, the number of pharmacists needing to do community service was about half of what it was now, she said.

Osman said it appeared as if there had been an increase in the number of professionals trained, but not an increase in state-funded posts to absorb them.

"[Another problem] is that the new software that automated the community service placement process for all health workers was rushed into use last year and there were many technical glitches."

The faulty software allocated 17 pharmacists to posts in Limpopo, but these posts were already filled.

The Department of Health did not respond to requests for comment. - *TMG Digital*

Source: Herald

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