**Care coordination is vital to achieving better health outcomes**

**Johannesburg - Medical care is generally divided into primary and special care. These two distinct forms of medical care serve different purposes in maintaining an individual's health. Primary care refers to the first point of contact for a patient with the healthcare system, usually a general practitioner, family physician, or paediatrician. On the other hand, speciality care involves healthcare professionals with advanced training and expertise in specific areas of medicine, such as cardiology, neurology, or oncology. These specialists provide more focused and in-depth care for patients with particular health conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, neurological disorders, or cancer.**

The choice between primary and speciality care depends on the individual's medical needs and condition.

Let's use Thandi as an example to explain this critical difference. Thandi has suffered from asthma for several years. Her doctor put her on chronic medication, which includes inhalers to manage her asthma. Despite taking her asthma treatment consistently, as advised by her doctor, Thandi has been complaining of persistent shortness of breath. She decides to visit her regular doctor.

During assessment, her doctor determines that there is fluid in her lungs and her blood pressure is very low. Thandi also tells the doctor that lately, she has been depressed and struggling to sleep. Concerned that this combination of health issues could be fatal, Thandi's doctor referred her to a pulmonologist for further evaluation and treatment.

A Pulmonologist has specialised training and expertise in diagnosing, treating, and managing various conditions affecting the lungs and airways. He provides the most appropriate and effective care for complex medical needs.

Examples of speciality care areas include:

* Oncology – cancer diagnosis, treatment and prevention
* Nephrology – kidney disorders
* Orthopaedics – bone and connective tissue disorders
* Cardiology – heart disorders
* Psychiatry – mental health and substance use disorder
* Endocrinology – health conditions related to the body's hormones

**Process - Why speciality care coordination is vital for patient health**

At Medshield, we encourage our members to follow Thandi's example and utilise primary healthcare providers as the first point of call for health issues. It leads to better health outcomes. Why do we say that?

Most often, people have multiple health issues that require the care of more than one health practitioner. Typically, specialists only focus on a specific area and may not consider how it interacts with the person's other health issues.

Care coordination is essential because it ensures that an individual's health issues are considered holistically. In the case of Thandi, the pulmonologist working with her and her primary care provider updated her care plan. The updated treatment plan now includes supplemental oxygen therapy, medication for low blood pressure and a referral to a psychiatrist for depression.

Thandi's doctor and the pulmonologist maintain open communication to continue monitoring her progress, address any complications that arise, and adjust her care as needed. Had she simply gone directly to the specialist without going through her regular doctor, the pulmonologist may have focused merely on her respiratory issues and not necessarily on her depression, low blood pressure or lifestyle.

Thandi's example illustrates how members can benefit from coordination between primary care providers and specialists. Your healthcare professional will also guide you in managing your health issues and healing process, including ensuring that patients get the specialist treatment, should that need arise.

Being proactive and well-informed about your medical scheme benefits can help members make informed decisions regarding their healthcare and ensure they receive appropriate cover for their specific needs and conditions, when they need it most. At Medshield, we provide comprehensive resources and support services to ensure members get the best health outcomes.

**FIN**

(592 words)

**EDITORS NOTES**

**FURTHER MEDIA INFORMATION AND INTERVIEW REQUESTS**

* Stone issues this release on behalf of the Medshield Medical Scheme.
* For media enquiries or interview requests, please contact Willem Eksteen, CEO of Stone or a media liaison member of the Stone team at media@stone.consulting / 011 447 0168
* Alternatively, contact Lilané Swanepoel at Medshield at 010 597 4982 / lilanes@medshield.co.za

**MORE INFORMATION ON THE 2024 MEDSHIELD BENEFIT OPTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

Benefits and Contribution amendments are subject to CMS approval.

Please refer to the 2024 Product Page on the Medshield website at <https://medshield.co.za/>. You can review the benefit adjustments and value adds and download the 2024 benefit guides

* **PremiumPlus** provides mature families and professionals with unlimited hospital cover in a hospital of their choice, with In-Hospital Medical Practitioner consultations and visits paid at 200% Medshield Private Tariff, and the freedom to manage daily healthcare expenses through a comprehensive Personal Savings Account and extended Above Threshold Cover.
* **MediBonus** provides mature families and professionals with unlimited hospital cover in a hospital of their choice, with In-Hospital Medical Practitioner consultations and visits paid at 200% Medshield Private Tariff, and the independence to manage daily healthcare expenses through a substantial Day-to-Day Limit.
* **MediSaver** is perfect for independent individuals and young professionals thinking about expanding their families. MediSaver offers unlimited hospital cover in the Compact Hospital Network, with the freedom to manage daily healthcare expenses through a generous Personal Savings Account.
* **MediPlus** provides middle to upper-income families with complete healthcare cover for major medical and daily healthcare needs. Unlimited hospital cover is provided through a choice of two hospital networks, Prime or the value-focused Compact Hospital Network. Daily healthcare expenses are covered through a generous Day-to-Day Limit. Benefits are identical in both categories, Prime and Compact, with care coordination and doctor referral mandated on MediPlus Compact.
* **MediCore** is ideal for healthy individuals looking for comprehensive hospital cover, with daily healthcare expenses self-managed. This option offers unlimited hospital cover in the Compact Hospital Network, with In-Hospital Medical Practitioner consultations and visits paid at Medshield Private Tariff 200%. Day-to-day healthcare expenses are self-funded.
* **MediValue - Prime and Compact** - is the ideal option for growing families. It offers affordable cover for major medical and daily healthcare needs. Unlimited hospital cover is provided through a choice of two hospital networks, Prime or the value-focused Compact Hospital Network. Daily healthcare expenses are covered through a sizeable Day-to-Day Limit. Benefits are identical on both options, MediValue Prime and MediValue Compact, with care coordination and doctor referral mandated on MediValue Compact.
* **MediSwift** is the ideal hospital plan for active, healthy individuals. Major medical emergency and In-Hospital treatment are covered up to R1 million per family in the Compact Hospital Network, with the added benefit of day-to-day treatment for non-professional sports injuries. As a hospital plan, MediSwift offers no Day-to-Day benefits, allowing members the freedom to self-manage their daily healthcare expenses.

**Medshield Medical Scheme - Live Assured knowing you have a Partner for Life.**

**ABOUT MEDSHIELD MEDICAL SCHEME**

* Medshield is a healthcare fund where all members contribute towards the fund monthly to cater for medical cover should the need arise.
* Medshield has been in operation since 1968, making us one of the most experienced, knowledgeable, and reliable medical schemes in South Africa. Our extensive experience in the healthcare sector guides our understanding of our members' needs. Our excellent cover and benefits combined with the best quality systems and services have resulted in our exceptional size and strength.
* Each of our options offers affordably priced benefits. We continuously review and improve the range of benefits in each option to bring you what you need.
* Our impeccable reputation of prompt payments to hospitals, doctors, pharmacies and other medical caregivers guarantees approval from service providers when you present your Medshield membership card.
* Our extensive partner networks place us in the perfect position to offer exceptionally competitive rates to our members.
* Medshield is well-represented throughout all nine provinces and provides seamless access to service providers in your area. Our geographical spread provides convenience if it becomes necessary for you to have a personal discussion with one of our experienced consultants. We also have a streamlined online claim submission system and immediate contact centre assistance, making it easier to manage your membership and claims from the convenience of your home or office.
* Our extensive range of additional benefits and services is another distinguishing factor. Our benefits and services have been designed to give members additional support when they need it most, for instance, in an emergency or when suffering from a chronic or life-threatening condition.
* Compared with other medical schemes, our trustworthiness, impeccable history, and exceptional service guarantee that we come out tops!