

Feedback: PSCBC Committee on GEMS – 12 April 2023

Product development

The Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) outlined the product development cycle and timelines for consultation purpose to ensure proper stakeholder engagement. It also outlined lessons for 2022 and approved products. GEMS indicated that in its endeavour to improve service and meet the needs of customers, it conducts surveys, engages with the DPSA and PSCBC and assesses members' complaints. The report was noted although labour raised concerns about limited surveys conducted by the scheme, *i.e.*, 500 per annum, and called upon GEMS to enhance the survey and go to departments where members are working instead of using other methods that do not reach the majority of members. Labour also complained about *Tanzanite One*, which causes members to pay lot of money out of their pockets, which is not affordable. GEMS responded that the enhancement of surveys will be considered. Regarding the high cost of *Tanzanite One*, it indicated that the majority of costs is the co-payment that is caused by failure to use nominated GPs, going to specialists without referrals, and using medicines that are not on the formulary. Members are advised to follow the rules to minimise the costs on their side.

Retirement transitions on GEMS

The delay in the processing of pension for members by the GEPP is causing problems as members find themselves without medical aid for the said period. The finalisation of the GEMS medical-aid subsidy process takes longer than three months, which causes members to be readmitted as new members that results in problems for the Scheme and members. Medical schemes are compelled to comply with the legislative framework, which directs that members' contribution must be received by the third of the month that they are covered. Subsequently, to address the problem, the Scheme developed a Debt Management Policy wherein it provided for the period up to three months that cannot be extended. However, the GEPP process sometimes takes longer than the period, leaving members exposed to termination. Engagement will ensue between parties to address this matter that adversely affects retired members.

GEMS Multivitamin Project

Members are aware that the Scheme provided five months' supply of multivitamins as part of value-added services to protect beneficiaries during the COVID-19 pandemic at a cost of R130 per beneficiary. GEMS reported that 1.2 million beneficiaries were eligible for the benefit, 600 000 units were ordered and currently, 86 000 units are still available. The distribution is earmarked to be concluded at the end of July 2023. Members are advised to take the advantage and obtain the multivitamins as winter and the flu season are approaching.

Members will be updated on developments.

Employees who want to join the PSA can visit the PSA's website (www.psa.co.za), send an email to ask@psa.co.za, or contact PSA Provincial Offices.

GENERAL MANAGER