



Our Investment Our Health Our Future

Our Ref: psychology/sm

11 November 2015

Rautenbach & Matthews

Stone House

510 Makou Street

Monument Park Ext 2

Pretoria

By email: Nadine@rmlawfirm.co.za

For attention: Nadine Matthews

Dear Madam,

POLMED: PSYCHOLOGY OUT OF SCOPE CLAIMS

(Your letter dated 02 November 2015 refers)

1. Your letter dated 02 November refers.
2. The psychology discipline came to Polmed's attention in 2014 due to an increase in claims amounts that resulted in a full review on the service providers within this discipline. Several irregular claiming trends were identified including but not limited to the following:
 - 2.1 Manipulation of tariffs that has resulted to excessive hours of consultations per day;
 - 2.2 Age inappropriateness;
 - 2.3 Irregular diagnostic services claimed.
3. In an attempt to resolve the matter, Polmed sought direction from various



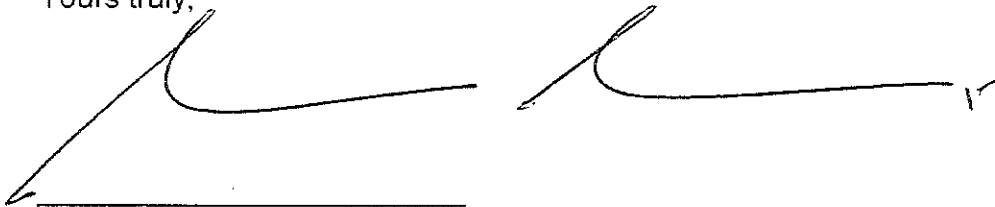
entities including but not limited the Healthcare Professions Council of South Africa ("HPCSA"), whose mandate includes clarifying the scope of practice of any professional healthcare body in SA.

4. Unfortunately, due to the on-going debate in the Western Cape High Court on the scope of practice of Educational- as well as Industrial psychologists (namely RelPAG and Justice Alliance of South Africa vs. Sodi, HPCSA, Minister of Health, Board of Healthcare Funders of SA), no guidance was forthcoming from any of the entities involved in the litigation.
5. However, for Polmed to conclude on the psychology review, Polmed further sought and obtained guidance from several entities and/or published articles including but not limited to the following:
 - 5.1 An article published in 2015 by the South African Society of Psychiatrists ("SASOP") under the heading: "The ethical and professional boundaries of clinical cooperation between psychiatrists and psychologists" whom proposed the following under the general scope of ethical rules:
 - 5.1.1 *"Competency limits (1) A psychologist shall limit his or her practice to areas within the boundaries of his or her competency based on his or her formal education, training, supervised experience and/or appropriate professional experience."*
 - 5.1.2 *"Cooperation with educational psychologists: the scope of practice of an educational psychologist includes: "assessing, diagnosing, and intervening in order to optimise human functioning in the learning and development; assessing cognitive, personality, emotional, and neuropsychological functions of people in relation to the learning and development in which they have been trained."*
 - 5.1.3 *"The emphasis remains therefore on learning and development. This obviously excludes mental illness and psychopathology. It would therefore be inappropriate to cooperate with an educational psychologist in the treatment of patients' mental disorders".*
 - 5.2 A letter from Prof Sodi dated 17 February 2014, the Professional Board of Psychology of the HPCSA, wherein he refers to the scope of practice of Educational psychologists as follow: *"We further wish to emphasize that Educational Psychologists are first and foremost, Psychologists working in the context of learning and development, and not Educationists"*. As outlined by Prof Sodi, Educational psychologists are thus first and foremost involved with the treatment and management of both learning and developmental disorders.

- 5.3 A letter from the Council of Medical Schemes ("CMS"), the Regulatory Body of Medical Schemes in SA, with regards to the compliance requirements set out in the Medical Scheme Act, No 131 of 1998. A copy of the letter received from CMS dated 21 July 2015 is attached as per **Annexure "A"**. From the aforesaid letter, Polmed regarded the following as a guideline to their solution: "...until such time that the court case against the current promulgated Act has been finalised – all entities in the healthcare sector must comply with the Act and thus the scope of practice of certain provider disciplines".
6. Apart from the above, Polmed's Medical Advisor further studied the psychology services required by our members and concluded as follow:
- 6.1 Polmed, being the Medical Scheme of the South African Police Service ("SAPS"), has a unique burden of disease which is different to most funders in South Africa. Particularly the high prevalence and incidence of mental disorders;
- 6.2 Polmed thus deals with a high prevalence of attempted as well as concluded homicides and suicides; and
- 6.3 Polmed therefore resolved that it is of the utmost importance that the SAPS members suffering from major psychiatric disorders be optimally managed and treated by Psychiatrists and Clinical Psychologists, in order to mitigate the clinical risk.
7. Finally Polmed utilised as guidance the Scheme rules, more particularly the annexure dedicated to the list of exclusions which relates to services not funded by Polmed and herewith attached as per **Annexure "B"**. From the attached list it is clear that both learning disorders as well as developmental disorders are exclusions and not funded by Polmed at all. It was for this reason that Polmed made a funding decision not to reimburse *inter alia* Educational psychologists.
8. Polmed is in no way prohibiting members having access to Educational psychologists but through our letters sought to achieve the following:
- 8.1 Firstly to bring awareness to members relating to the difference in psychologists' sub-categories; and
- 8.2 Secondly that Polmed will not fund the services rendered by *inter alia* educational psychologists, as the services rendered by these sub-category psychologists falls under the scheme exclusions of Polmed.

9. Polmed reserves their right to retain their funding decision of not reimbursing *inter alia* educational psychologists and further not to enter into any debate addressing the scope of practice towards certain categories of psychologists until finalisation of the Western Cape High Court matter.
10. We trust that the above is in order and that the matter has been clarified.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke, positioned above a horizontal line.

Mbasa Mxenge

Principal Officer