

## Centre for health Systems Research & Development

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### Politics of mental healthcare in post-apartheid South Africa

#### CITATION

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#### ABSTRACT

Recent events in post-apartheid South Africa have exposed a decidedly political dimension to mental healthcare. This was exemplified in three important cases: the recent grants crisis of the South African Social Security Agency, a court case between the state and nongovernmental organisations, and the Life Esidimeni tragedy. These events demonstrate that despite significant policy shifts toward basic human rights and care of people living with mental illness, these cases demonstrate the contradictory elements of macroeconomic and health policy exposed a neoliberal tendency towards providing public mental healthcare. In examining these cases, key features emerged, including: the commodification of people living with mental illness, the pertinence of auditing, accounting practices, and dynamics of globalisation, de- and re-nationalisation. This article speaks to a tangible gap in the discourse on mental healthcare in South Africa, by highlighting the political dimensions that are involved under an era of neoliberalism.