



MEDIA RELEASE

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September is Pharmacy Month: South African Pharmacy Council urges public to seek primary health care related needs from pharmacies instead of self-medicating or ignoring minor ailments

September is National Pharmacy Month, a period of creating awareness on various health matters and how pharmacy professionals (pharmacists and pharmacy support personnel) as healthcare professionals can help enrich the health of communities. The 2021 Pharmacy Month theme is “Think Pharmacy”, the theme urges South Africans to think pharmacy first for their primary health care needs.

The regulator of pharmacy in South Africa, the South African Pharmacy Council (SAPC), is urging members of the public to seek primary health care interventions from pharmacies instead of buying over-the-counter medicines and consuming these without a pharmacist’s advice on the need for that particular medicine, correct dose, contraindications, and safe period of use, amongst other factors. It can be very dangerous to one’s health to receive advice on the correct use of medicines from any other person such as family members who are not health professionals.

The President of the SAPC, Mr Mogologolo Phasha, called on South Africans to not ignore minor ailments and symptoms with the hope of these going away. “Sometimes a constant headache, body ache or stomach cramp can be a sign of a more serious underlying health issue which, if detected soon enough, can be managed or cured before it causes major damage to the body,” says Mr Phasha.

Pharmacies are more than just access points for medicines. Pharmacy professionals can assist members of the community with various health matters including providing advice and services on vaccination/immunisation, family planning, testing and screening for certain conditions and ailments, first aid, and self-care advice, among many other pharmaceutical care services. Pharmacy professionals are part of a team of health care workers, so they can refer members of the public to other health care professionals depending on your unique health conditions. And, as medicine experts, also provide advice to their fellow colleagues in the health care fraternity on the efficacy, correct dosage and safe use of medicines, amongst others.

Mr Vincent Tlala, the Registrar and CEO of the SAPC, says there are various dangers to consuming medicines without counselling from a qualified health care worker. “Medicines are not like groceries. As such, even medicines for an ailment that may seem as minor as a headache should be taken only after consulting a pharmacist or other health care workers. These professionals would take into account the other medication you are consuming and your unique health condition, amongst other factors, and recommend a medicine suitable for you,” says Mr Tlala.

Mr Tlala further added that patients visiting pharmacies should always ensure that they inform the pharmacy professionals (pharmacists and pharmacy support personnel) about any other medicines that they are currently using in order to receive proper and adequate advice to avoid possible interactions between different medicines being taken concurrently. It is both a right and equally a responsibility of a patient to ensure that they disclose all other health conditions which they might have, in order to receive adequate advice from their pharmacy professionals.

Issued by the South African Pharmacy Council

Ends.

Note to editors and journalists: Pharmacy Month is an annual health awareness month aimed at improving the health of the population and educating them about health care services provided by pharmacy professionals and how they can benefit from these. The 2021 Pharmacy Month awareness programme is steered by the National Department of Health, South African Pharmacy Council, Independent Community Pharmacy Association, and the Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa. More information on Pharmacy Month can be accessed at www.sapc.za.org/PharmacyMonth

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