



MEDIA STATEMENT

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Media Statement: Expanded HIV and AIDS treatment now a reality

The regulator of the pharmacy profession in the country, the South African Pharmacy Council (SAPC), welcomes the decision of the High Court of South Africa in relation to the legality, rationality and necessity of Pharmacist-Initiated Management of Antiretroviral Therapy (PIMART).

South Africa has the largest number of people living with HIV worldwide.

The superior court yesterday confirmed what has been our long-held view that PIMART is a necessary and competently designed intervention programme to support South Africa's efforts in providing access to patients diagnosed with HIV and Aids.

PIMART increases access to much-needed HIV prevention and treatment care, with an immediate benefit of improved quality of life and increased life expectancy for more persons living with HIV and Aids. It will also improve efficiencies in the currently congested health care system. Patients that are diagnosed, now has the opportunity to be initiated sooner within the multidisciplinary health care team which now includes pharmacists.

PIMART remains an appropriate intervention to support the existing treatment and prevention mechanisms for HIV and Aids. PIMART would help reach a large number of underserved, undertested and hard-to-reach populations, who are currently without access to HIV prevention and treatment services. The nation's plan, and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)'s 95-95-95 strategy, to ensure that 95% of Persons Living with HIV and Aids (PLWA) are aware of their status, 95% of these individuals are on treatment and 95% of those on treatment are virally suppressed is more in reach with the implementation of PIMART.

As from today, pharmacists would join other primary health care practitioners in providing primary care in relation to HIV and Aids. This includes the provision of first-line antiretroviral treatment, as well as HIV testing and prevention services.

The PIMART programme is designed to foster collaboration with other healthcare professionals (including nurses and doctors) in the provision of HIV care that is aimed at increasing accessibility to prevention and

treatment in line with the national treatment guidelines, to ensure increased life expectancy and quality of life for persons living with HIV and Aids while arresting the increasing HIV infection rate. PIMART's implementation further accelerates the attainment of the commitment made by President Cyril Ramaphosa in 2018 to place two (2) million more HIV-positive persons on treatment in the medium term.

What is PIMART?

Pharmacist-Initiated Management of Antiretroviral Therapy (PIMART) is a type of pharmacist-initiated therapy which aims to allow pharmacists to join nurses and other clinicians in the fight against the rising HIV infections in South Africa. In addition, PIMART will help address the lack of adherence to treatment by persons living with HIV (PLWA), and the high number of avoidable HIV-related deaths by allowing these individuals an access to antiretroviral treatment through Section 22A(15) of the Medicines and Related Substances Act, 101 of 1965. Following a carefully designed supplementary training, PIMART allows these trained pharmacists to administer first-line treatment to patients or, in complex cases, refer patients to clinicians and/or specialists for the management of their conditions.

Programmes similar to PIMART have been successfully deployed in several countries the world over and can help South Africa attain its HIV management targets. The programme may also arrest and lower the ballooning HIV budget (which is nearly half the national health budget) by reducing the rate of new infections, increasing life expectancy among PLWA by ensuring adherence to treatment and viral suppression, and increasing the number of persons testing and referring complex cases along the referral pathways.

Issued by the South African Pharmacy Council

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