



MEDIA RELEASE

25 September 2019

September is Pharmacy Month, 25 September is World Pharmacists Day:
South African Pharmacy Council encourages citizens to seek help amid rising mental and behavioural disorder-related deaths

*Six (6) people die from mental and behavioural disorders every day, on average. At least one person loses their lives on a daily basis due to intentional self-harm. An analysis of causes of death data for South Africa for the eleven-year period 2006-2016 indicates that 20 398 lives were lost to mental and behavioural disorders, while a further 5 077 lives were lost to intentional self-harm over the same period (**see attached info slides for further details**). This sad reality should not be allowed to continue as mental illness can be treated.*

It is against this backdrop that the South African Pharmacy Council, in partnership with the National Department of Health, Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa and Independent Community Pharmacists Association, has chosen as the theme for the 2019 Pharmacy Month as “*Mental illness can be treated – Ask your pharmacist for advice*”.

The South African Pharmacy Council and partners have elected to use Pharmacy Month, the month of September, as an opportunity to highlight Mental Illness in South Africa in an effort to educate the public and to rid society of the taboo and stigma around mental illness.

During the month of September, the South African Pharmacy Council will join others in Pharmacy in creating awareness around the various forms of mental illness, how mental illnesses can be spotted and most importantly, how mental illness can be treated.

“We are living in an age where mental health problems such as depression and anxiety are being diagnosed in school children. It is important that we educate the public about the solutions and treatments available, many of which may begin with a visit to the nearest pharmacy. We must teach our communities that mental illness does not equate to insanity and should be treated as seriously as physical illnesses,” says Mr Amos Masango, Registrar of the South African Pharmacy Council.

Mr Masango added that while pharmacists are not the designated treating healthcare workers for mental illness, they serve as counsellors on the effective use of medicine and, as the first port of call for health issues, pharmacists are best placed to refer mental illness patients to a journey of recovery. A journey they continue to be part of as they dispense and advise on the formulation of treatment regimens, in line with the unique health circumstances of each patient.

(Information material guiding persons with mental health challenges on where and how to seek help can be found at this link:

<https://www.sapc.za.org/PharmacyMonth>)

Issued by the South African Pharmacy Council

Ends

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