



HIV/AIDS NEWSLETTER

NEWSLETTER FROM THE NATIONAL HIV/AIDS AND TB PROGRAMME, PRETORIA

24 April 2001

NEWS FROM THE EDITOR

It has been quite some time since we have been able to put out this newsletter, but I hope that this means that this newsletter is much anticipated and appreciated!

For contributions, please submit contributions and suggestions to serenc@health.gov.za.

STAFF MATTERS

There have not been any new appointments in the last month.

However, an exciting new development is that the TB Directorate now forms part of the Chief Directorate, and thus the name has changed to Chief Directorate: HIV/AIDS and TB.

From now on we hope to also include TB news into the newsletter.

MEETING OF HIV/AIDS MANAGERS

On 22-23 March 2001 HIV/AIDS managers at national and provincial level met to discuss areas of mutual interest, and addressing issues such as provincial capacities, coordination between national and provincial, and plans for 2001.

This meeting was very constructive, and set the ground for future interaction. It also allowed everyone to meet some of the new faces in the provinces. In the Eastern Cape Mrs. Nomalanga Makwedini has taken over as HIV/AIDS Manager, and in KwaZulu-Natal Dr. Sandile Buthelei has taken

over from Wanda Mthembu who has retired. Good luck to them!

ANTENATAL SURVEY

Hopefully be now everyone has seen the 2000 antenatal survey results. For those who have not yet, the HIV prevalence figures are:

<u>Province</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
KZN	32.5%	36.2%
MP	27.3%	29.7%
GP	23.9%	29.4%
FS	27.9%	27.9%
NW	23.0%	22.9%
EC	18.0%	20.2%
NP	11.4%	13.2%
NC	10.1%	11.2%
WC	7.1%	8.7%
National	22.4%	24.5%

For those who would like a full report (by fax - no electronic version available), please phone Yvonne or Celestina on (012) 312-0121.

COURT CASE

Below follows some excerpts from the media statement by the Minister of Health on 19 April 2001 after the 39 pharmaceutical companies that had sued the Government (Department of Health) withdrew the case:

"Earlier today in the Pretoria High Court 38 pharmaceutical companies and the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association announced that they were withdrawing from the



court action that was intended to strike down major provisions of our Medicines and Related Substances Control Amendment Act of 1997.

We are pleased that the pharmaceutical industry has finally recognised both the legitimacy of our struggle, as South Africans, for affordable health care and the genuineness of our respect for the international trade treaties that we are party to.

We regard today's settlement as a victory in the sense that it unfreezes our law and restore to us the power to pursue policies that we believe are critical to securing medicines at affordable rates and exercising wise control over them. We have undertaken to include pharmaceutical manufacturers in such initiatives, where appropriate, and we fully intend to pursue this course of action.

The settlement that we have announced today is the product of a large number of people in many countries. It is the work of countless South Africans who stood up in an expression of national unity and clearly supported the approach of government.

We do not delude ourselves that the end of the court case is the end of our struggle for access to affordable medicines. In reality, we are only at the start of a long and arduous journey and this law is merely a vehicle. Difficult decisions about contending health care priorities lie ahead.

We will move speedily to:

- Set up the Pricing Committee whose job will include the gathering of pharmaceutical*

intelligence and advising the Minister on a transparent pricing system for medicines.

- Activate the system of generic substitution, which will have major benefits for consumers in the private health care sector -- and especially medical schemes.*

In due course we will reconstitute the Medicines Control Council in line with the Act.

The South African Government is proposing, as a start, to set up a joint working group with the pharmaceutical industry in order to consult on and consider broader issues in the area of health care.

The resolution of this court case only confirms our view that international markets, which play an increasingly important role in all our lives, have no inbuilt conscience. But governments and ordinary people acting collectively have a precious responsibility to make the huge companies that dominate the markets accountable for how they respond to the most critical issues of our times.

ACHIEVEMENTS 2000

Early in April 2001 the Unit had to report on achievements for the year 2000. There have been many in the last year, but here are only some those highlights of 2000.

- Launch of the HIV/AIDS/STI Strategic Plan for South Africa, 2000 - 2005 in June 2000, as well as the sectoral summits to popularise the strategic plan*
- Launch of nine guidelines related to HIV/AIDS in October 2000, such as the treatment of opportunistic infections*



- Active participation in the South African National AIDS Council and the formation of its five Technical Task Teams
- Active participation in multiple international forums, such as WHO and UNAIDS meetings, as well as international conferences
- Successful participation in the Durban 2000 AIDS Conference, as well as a successful workshop to reflect on the Conference in August 2000
- Launch of the *Integrated Plan for Children and Youth Infected and Affected by HIV/AIDS*. Major planning for the components of:
 - o Home-based care
 - o Voluntary counselling and testing, and
 - o Life skills completed
- Establishment of a programme to expand research by implementing a mother-to-child HIV transmission intervention in two sites per province. Most of the planning is complete, and implementation will commence in 2001
- Creation of a Logistics Management Information System to ensure the efficient and effective functioning of the process of procuring and distributing male and female condoms
- Continued involvement and support of research projects, including the South African AIDS Vaccine Initiative, and various STI targeted interventions
- Supporting NGOs, civil society sectors, and government departments
- Increasing support for TB/HIV Integration



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