

AVAILABILITY OF ANTIRETROVIRAL (ARV) AND TUBERCULOSIS (TB) MEDICINES IN THE FREE STATE

7 March 2012

The Free State Department of Health wants to emphatically dismiss the assertion by some media reports that there is a crisis in the provision of medication to its communities due to suppliers being owed R92 m and therefore unwilling to provide essential medication. The truth of the matter is that only R36,8 m of the R92 m is owed to medicine suppliers, R27,8 m of which is outstanding for 30 days; R4,2 m for 60 days and R1.1 m for 90 days. The remaining R51.2 m is owed to suppliers of medical equipment and will be settled in line with supply chain policies before the end of March 2012. There is therefore no cash crisis in the Free State department of Health.

There is a challenge in the supply of the ARVs (Stavudine and Tenofovir), TB medication (INH 100 mg and 300 mg) as well as Actraphane (insulin for diabetes mellitus). This challenge exists simply because the pharmaceutical manufacturers of these essential medications are unable to keep up with the demand from the various provinces and is a national problem and not confined to the Free State. It is also a challenge that is being addressed by the national Department of Health together with all the provinces and the pharmaceutical suppliers. This combined effort is all done to ensure that no patient is left without the supply of these essential medicines.

As on 2 March 2012, the province had the following units available, which were immediately distributed to the various facilities:

- Stavudine 44 000 units
- Tenofovir 14 000 units
- INH 300 mg 16 500 units
- INH 100 mg 6 000 units
- Actraphane 1 000 units
- Rifofour 112 3000 units
- Rifofour 84s 1 300 units
- Rifofour 56s 4 50 units

The Free State Department of Health has also placed orders for the following medications:

- Tenofovir 100 000 units
- Stavudine 80 000 units
- Isoniazide 100 mg [84s] 10 000 units
- Isoniazide 300 mg [28s] 80 000units
- Actraphane pen sets 10 000 units
- Actraphane 10 ml vials 30 000 units
- Rifafour 56s 8 000 units
- Rifafour 84s 5 000 units
- Rifafour 112's 18 000 units

These will be delivered in the next few days. This is a clear indication that whilst there are challenges with supply of some medications, there is definitely no crisis at this stage. We therefore do not expect any of our patients to go a single day without their medication. We have implemented the following measures to ensure this.

- There is redistribution of medicines within the districts to ensure that there are no institutions that are without medication.
- There is a task team that meets daily and monitors the levels of drug supply in the various institutions and reports to the Head of Department on the situation.
- The medical depot has been cleared of all the medicines that are in short supply.

If there are any patients that have missed their medication owing to the current situation, they are requested to contact the Free State Department of Health at 0800 53 55 54 or send an SMS to 083 421 029 0141 with the name of the clinic or hospital and your name and surname or message for further advice and support.

There is currently other ARV drug stocks amounting to R12,5 m in the medical depot awaiting distribution when required by the institutions. The stock levels for medicines (including ARV, TB and chronic disease medication) in all health facilities in the Free State are at 96,7%. There is no reason to suspect that the Free State Department of Health is experiencing shortages that will leave any patient without treatment or cause patients to be turned away in the long run as there is sufficient ARV, TB and chronic disease medication in hospitals and clinics in the Free State.

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