



MEDIA RELEASE

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September is Pharmacy Month: South African Pharmacy Council urges women and the youth to take advantage of primary health care and sexual reproductive health services available at pharmacies

September is National Pharmacy Month, a period of creating awareness on various health matters and how pharmacy professionals (pharmacists and Pharmacist's Assistants) can help enrich the health of communities. The 2022 Pharmacy Month theme is "Woman and Youth Health", the theme highlights women's health and youth health services and care that can be accessed from pharmacies across South Africa.

In light of rising HIV infections and the teenage pregnancy scourge (with 94 000 births to teenage mothers in 2020 alone¹, some of whom are as young as 14 years old), the South African Pharmacy Council (SAPC) calls upon the youth and women in our communities to take advantage of the services offered by Pharmacists and Pharmacist Assistants in order to lead healthier lives and prevent unintended pregnancies.

Mr Mogologolo Phasha, President of the SAPC, decried the fact that children as young as 14 years old became mothers to over 2 600 new-borns while teenagers between 15 and 19 gave birth to over 91 000 babies in a 12-month period¹ (2020). "Pharmacists offer more than the expert advice on medicines and care for minor ailments that patients have become accustomed to. They are an access point for primary health care, contraception, and other reproductive health services, including emergency contraception," says Mr Mogologolo Phasha.

Despite the best efforts of health care workers across the nation, HIV infections continue to rise annually, with the number of persons living with HIV estimated to have risen by at least 200 000 between 2021 and 2022². SAPC Registrar/CEO, Mr Vincent Tlala, urged young people to seek both guidance and pharmaceutical care concerning the prevention of sexually transmitted illnesses from local pharmacies or other health care establishments. "Pharmacies provide a host of healthcare and family planning services, including the prevention of sexually transmitted illnesses and unplanned pregnancies amongst many others," says Mr Tlala.

Pharmacy professionals are medicines experts who contribute to the health of society by, among others, producing medicines and providing guidance on their effective use to both patients and their colleagues in the multidisciplinary healthcare team. They can also help patients with the monitoring of chronic illnesses including diabetes, asthma, and high blood pressure. For patients

¹ Recorded live births (2020), Source: Statistics South Africa & Department of Home Affairs (National Population Register of South Africa (NPR)).

² Mid-year population estimates (2022), Source: Statistics South Africa.

needing advanced care, pharmacists are well equipped to provide referrals to other health care practitioners.

During Pharmacy Month, we reiterate that, in addition to expert counsel on the effective use of medicines, communities should also approach their local pharmacies for their primary health care needs, including the following:

- First aid and wound care management;
- Chronic medication;
- Screening for TB, STIs, HIV, pregnancy, diabetes, blood pressure, cholesterol, and other ailments;
- Baby wellness services (immunisations, weighing, feeding advice and infant care, including nappy rash, colic and common infant diseases); and
- Any other health care advice.

“Visiting your local pharmacy will always be a better option than suffering in silence or self-medicating, as pharmacies have a range of health care experts for all your primary health care needs,” says Mr Tlala.

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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 2022 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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