



SAHPRA cautions against medicine stockpiling including Chloroquine containing products

In addition to licensing medicines that are safe, effective and of good quality, SAHPRA is also responsible for monitoring the use and misuse of medicines that are already on the market. One form of medicine misuse is stockpiling of medicines, particularly for use outside of the conditions of licensing (e.g. for indications that are not approved)

It has come to SAHPRA's attention that there is a rush by the public to acquire and store chloroquine containing products from pharmacies in anticipation of a potential COVID-19 infection. This is probably in response to various media reports suggesting the potential value of this medicine in managing patients infected with COVID-19 and fears of contracting the coronavirus infection.

Chloroquine is a medication previously used to prevent and to treat malaria. It is regarded as a Schedule 2 antimalarial agent, used in combination with proguanil for malaria prevention and Schedule 4 when used for malaria treatment. Recent reports suggest that chloroquine (among various other treatments) may have some benefit in treating patients with the more severe form of the disease

This kind of stockpiling of medicines on a large scale can have drastic consequences on people's access to important and potentially life-saving medicines when they are actually needed and is therefore strongly discouraged.

SAHPRA wishes to reiterate that the use of chloroquine and other treatments mentioned in the media for the management of coronavirus is **still investigational** where both the benefits as well as the potential risks of these treatment in patients is still being carefully studied. An international clinical trial, called the Solidarity Trial, under the aegis of the World Health Organization is underway to accumulate as much evidence as possible about the merit of chloroquine as well as other medicines for the management of the more severe forms of the coronavirus COVID-19. The public is reminded that the **vast majority (approximately 80%) of patients** who get infected with COVID-19 will only manifest with **mild symptoms** and will recover fully. It is therefore imperative that adequate stocks of these investigational treatments is always easily available for those who progress to the more severe form of the disease.

Medicine stockpiling by those who do not need chloroquine and other investigational treatments for COVID-19 could have important negative public health consequences including our ability to effectively respond to this international crisis.

Therefore, SAHPRA urges the pharmacies to effectively manage the access to chloroquine containing products and limit any possible stock piling as it could lead to shortages of these medicines for those patients who may really need them.

Sincerely.

Dr Boitumelo Semete-Makokotlela
SAHPRA CEO
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