MEDIA RELEASE

SAHPRA encourages the safe use of medicines and reporting of suspected side effects this #MedSafetyWeek

Embargo: Immediate release

Pretoria, 07 November 2024 – The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) encourages members of the public to always report any suspected side effects they may experience from taking medicines, vaccines and/or using medical devices, to help make medicines safer for everyone. While humanity benefits greatly from medicines in the treatment of illness and management of certain conditions, medicines may at times cause side effects. However, the risk of side effects and severe harm can be drastically reduced by taking medicines correctly and following the advice of a healthcare practitioner.

SAHPRA, together with over 90 other medicines and health products regulators as well as healthcare organisations globally, is participating in the annual #MedSafetyWeek awareness initiative, which takes place between 4 and 10 November 2024, under the theme "the importance of using medicines in the right way to prevent side effects, and to report side effects when they do occur".

The awareness initiative is spearheaded by the Uppsala Monitoring Centre under the auspices of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Programme for International Drug Monitoring, a programme whose member organisations work nationally and collaborate internationally to monitor and identify adverse effects of medicines and vaccines, to reduce risks to patients, and to establish worldwide pharmacovigilance standards and systems.

During this #MedSafetyWeek and beyond, SAHPRA is calling upon patients, caregivers and healthcare professionals to utilise its reporting tools to report all suspected side effects and adverse reactions.

SAHPRA Chief Executive Officer, Dr Boitumelo Semete-Makokotlela, indicates that handling and storing as well as taking medicines as directed by a healthcare professional is key in reducing the incidence of adverse reactions. “Research shows that about half of all side effects are preventable. Patient safety is our top priority and during #MedSafetyWeek, we wish to remind patients to take their medicines as instructed and healthcare professionals to review therapies as well as each patient’s unique health conditions before prescribing or dispensing medicines,” says Dr Semete-Makokotlela.

SAHPRA calls upon the South African public and healthcare professionals to use either the MedSafety App or the eReporting portal both accessible on the SAHPRA website to report suspected side effects from health products. All reports are assessed and examined by SAHPRA to determine the correct steps to protect medicine users in South Africa from harm. The purpose is to gain better knowledge about known side effects and to discover new ones. This can result in warnings and changes to how a medicine is used. SAHPRA’s MedSafety App and eReporting portal can be used for reporting suspected adverse drug reactions from medicines, vaccines, herbal products, biological medicines and any quality issues relating to health products.

Ends

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Notes to Editors:

SAHPRA will post this media release on its website. Navigate to the News section on the website.

A podcast will be recorded and posted on the home page. Scroll down the home page to "**SAHPRA TV and Podcasts**". Podcasts appear on the right-hand side.

Should you wish to request an interview, please send your request to media@sahpra.org.za and Madimetja.Mashishi@sahpra.org.za

Updates on vaccine registration can be accessed here:

Vaccines - News and updates (sahpra.org.za) - https://www.sahpra.org.za/news-and-updates/vaccines-news-and-updates/

About SAHPRA:

SAHPRA is tasked with regulating (monitoring, evaluating, investigating, inspecting and registering) all health products. This includes clinical trials, complementary medicines, medical devices and in-vitro diagnostics (IVDs). Furthermore, SAHPRA has the added responsibility of overseeing radiation control in South Africa. SAHPRA's mandate is outlined in the Medicines and Related Substances Act (Act No 101 of 1965 as amended) as well as the Hazardous Substances Act (Act No 15 of 1973).

SAHPRA has three pillars to ensure that medicines, medical devices and IVDs meet the requisite standards to protect the health and well-being of all who reside in South Africa:

- Safety
- Efficacy
- Quality

It is these three pillars that define the ethos of SAHPRA.