

## **SUMMARY OF PHARMACEUTICAL NEWS**

### ***World Medical Association calls for action on fake medicines***

**In October** the World Medical Association (WMA) warned that the shortage of medicines during the Covid-19 pandemic has led to the growth of fake and substandard products.

The WMA suggested that medical associations of countries around the world should actively oppose the illegal sales of medicines on the internet and the illegal importing of medicines and counterfeit medicines. Websites illegally offering medical products not controlled by state health authorities should be shut down as quickly and possible standards and mechanisms established guaranteeing the continuity and the supply of medicines to avoid shortages.

### ***SA company to manufacture Covid-19 rapid test kits***

**In August** the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) authorised a local biotechnology company, CapeBio, to manufacture rapid test kits for Covid-19. The test kits, co-developed by CapeBio and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), will help to reduce SA's reliance on imports, making it easier for the country to gain speedy access to test kits. At full capacity, the company will be able to produce up to 5 000 kits a day, with each kit providing for 1 000 tests.

### ***Scientists debate rule change to allow for self-testing***

**In November *Business Day*** reported that the Health Minister's advisory committee (MAC) on Covid-19 is discussing whether the government should scrap rules that stop people from being able to do their own Covid-19 tests at home, school or work.

MAC member Ian Sanne, CEO of Right to Care, said his personal view is to make testing more widely available by permitting the sale of test kits through pharmacies. He said we are underdiagnosing Covid-19, and the quantum being seen through the national database is enough to manage the public health decision-making.

### ***WHO green-lights first malaria vaccine***

**In October *Bloomberg News*** reported that the first vaccine for malaria, the mosquito-borne disease that kills 400 000 people each year, is set to be deployed more widely after more than three decades of work and about \$1-bn (about R15-bn) in investment. A study of 6 000 children, published in August, found that the combination of antimalarial drugs and vaccination (developed by GlaxoSmithKline) lowered hospitalisations and deaths from the disease by about 70% after three years.

A shot developed for the disease at the UK's University of Oxford earlier this year became the first to meet a WHO goal of more than 75% efficacy in a mid-stage study.

BioNTech, meanwhile, is seeking to follow its successful Covid-19 vaccine with one to prevent malaria.

### ***SA pharmacists might soon prescribe HIV treatment***

**In July** it was reported that SA pharmacists might soon be permitted to prescribe HIV medicines without people needing a script from a doctor or nurse. SA's Pharmacist-Initiated Management of ART (PIMART) programme seeks to improve links to HIV treatment and prevention therapy among underreached and underserved groups and communities and will be the first of its kind globally - potentially paving the way for other countries.

***32-m J&J vaccines exported to Europe, while SA was waiting***

In August *New York Times* published an exposé that thousands of vaccines produced at the Aspen plant in Gqeberha in the Eastern Cape were sent to European countries while SA was still waiting for its order from J&J. According to Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng, UN special rapporteur on right to health, the 32-m doses of the J&J vaccines that reportedly left SA could have saved millions of lives in the country and on the African continent.

Apparently the confidential contract that SA signed with J&J waived its right to impose export restrictions on the vaccines produced in the country.

Meanwhile - in response to the *New York Times* news - the Presidency said vaccines produced at the Aspen facility have been distributed to several African countries.

According to the statement SA was on track to receive the full J&J order of 31-m doses by March 2022.