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SAHPRA experts fed up with delayed payments

*In October **SundayTimes** reported that public health experts who work part time for the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) are encrypting their reports to force the agency to pay them before it can access their work.*

According to some experts some of their colleagues were quitting, while others were password-protecting their work until SAHPRA paid them. According to SAHPRA there had been “technical glitches” with the new payroll system, however, they are addressing the matter.

In a letter to external experts on September 17, SAHPRA CEO Boitumelo Semete-Makokotlela apologised for missed payments.

ANALYSIS: SAHPRA doubtful of covid home testing kits - Groundup (20 October 2021)

Since April this year the UK and US started using free kits for rapid antigen testing, which are simple to use (much like pregnancy tests) and provide reasonably reliable results within 30 minutes or less. If the test shows a positive result, the person should go for a PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test to confirm if they are Covid-19 positive. In contrast to antigen tests, PCR tests have to be processed in a laboratory.

However, in March 2020, the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA), which regulates the use of all health products in the country, released the regulatory requirements for Covid-19 Rapid Tests stating that test kits may not be advertised or sold to the public, are intended for use by professionals only, and are not intended for self-testing. Yuven Gounden, spokesperson for SAHPRA, said the decision was made due to a fear of misinterpretation as a person who is infected may proceed to act as if they are uninfected and spread infection.

Meanwhile, rapid antigen tests from 20 different manufacturers have been approved by SAHPRA for use by medical professionals.

According to an article in Nature, people should think of rapid antigen tests as “tests of infectiousness, not of infection.”

Harvard epidemiologist Michael Mina suggests that home testing could hugely curb outbreaks.

Doctors anxious over backlogs following HPCSA's order on CPD

In August doctors warned their regulator, the SA Health Profession's Council (HPCSA), against creating an “administrative nightmare” that could potentially delay doctor registrations and cost medics even more in future. This follows the HPCSA decision to make it mandatory for doctors to submit records of their continuous professional development (CPD) activities.

Doctors allege that – during the Covid-19 pandemic - the HPCSA has introduced a new online portal that makes the submission of these documents mandatory, resulting in backlogs at the

council. According to SA Medical Association (SAMA) chairperson, Dr Angelique Coetzee, the doctor unions remain concerned about approval delays, and are currently working with the HPCSA to fast-track the processing of these essential documents.

HPCSA spokesperson Christopher Tsatsawane said the HPCSA plans to clear the CPD backlog soon.”

More than 100 foreign-trained doctors take HPCSA to court over registration

*In August it was reported that more than 100 doctors trained overseas who have been blocked by the **Health Professions Council (HPCSA)** from practising in **South Africa** have launched urgent court proceedings in a bid to be registered as medical professionals. The HPCSA has not invited them to sit the required examinations not does it answer their inquiries, the applicants claim.*

The group – some of whom have been in limbo since 2019 – want to interdict the HPCSA and the Medical and Dental Professional Board from invoking the provisions of the New Pathway Policy Guideline for foreign-trained doctors, adopted in June last year, which prevents them from writing their qualifying exams.

The doctors said in court papers that they simply wanted to write the required clinical exams required for foreign-trained doctors, scheduled for next month. The HPCSA, however, is refusing to enrol them for this.

*All of the applicants are South African citizens and have graduated from medical training institutions base in **China, Mauritius, Romania, Ukraine and Malaysia**.*