



## **Cancer Alliance calls for Intellectual Property Reform in SA**

Thousands of cancer patients in South Africa are dying because they cannot afford medicines that are available in other countries at a fraction of the price. These patients are not getting the treatment that they need because our government routinely grants patents that could have been challenged and rejected.

South Africa's patent system is geared towards monopoly holders and is at odds with government's Constitutional obligation to take reasonable legislative steps to protect and promote the right to health of people living in South Africa. A revision in South Africa's intellectual property policy could see the prices of medicines drop by as much as 90%.

To commemorate World Cancer Day on February 4, Cancer Alliance announced the eight medicines which will be the focus of a concerted two year campaign to change the path of cancer treatment in our country.

The eight medicines have been chosen from a case study of 24 life-saving cancer medicines published in October 2017 by Cancer Alliance and Fix The Patent Laws. The research and the advocacy campaign are funded by a grant from the Open Society Foundation (OSF).

The research shows that only seven of the 24 medicines are available in the public sector – where 84% of South Africans access medical treatment. Private sector patients have access to 21 of these drugs. In spite of 10 of the medicines being on the WHO essential medicines list, only four of them are deemed essential in South Africa.

Of the 24 medicines, 15 are available in India for less than half of the price offered to the South African private sector. In the most extreme case, a year's supply of lenalidomide is priced at R882,000 in South Africa and less than R32,000 in India. Ten of the medicines that are not available in the South African public sector are available in India for less than half the price offered to the South African private sector.

The eight medicines were chosen in consultation with a wide group of clinicians in the public and private sector, and reflect the burden of disease in South Africa. They are:

- Breast – Trastuzumab
- Prostate - Abiraterone acetate
- Multiple Myeloma - Lenalidomide
- Non-Small Lung Cell – Erlotinib
- B-cell Lymphoma – Bendamustine
- Leukemia – Rituximab
- Melanoma - Ipilimumab

Some of the medicines listed may also be used for the treatment of childhood cancer but are seldom available in the public sector. These are Rituximab, Lenalidomide and Bendamustine.

The advocacy campaign, including patient stories and clinical perspectives, will be highlighted on the Cancer Alliance website at <https://www.canceralliance.co.za/>.

The campaign ties in to the international World Cancer Day initiatives:

- We Can Shape Policy Change,
- We Can Make the Case for Investment in Cancer Control,
- We Can Improve Access to Cancer Care, and
- I Can Make My Voice Heard.

### **About the Cancer Alliance**

Cancer Alliance is a collective group of cancer control non-profit organisations and cancer advocates brought together under a common mandate, to provide a platform of collaboration for cancer civil society to speak with one voice and be a powerful tool to affect change for all South African adults and children affected by cancer.

The 26 cancer control non-profit organisation and cancer advocates include:

AmaBele Belles' Project Flamingo,	National Council Against Smoking,
Breast Course 4 Nurses,	Oncology Nursing Association of SA,
Breast Health Foundation (BHF),	Pancreatic Cancer Network of SA,
Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSAs),	People Living With Cancer (PLWC),
Can-Sir,	Pink Trees for Pauline,
CanSurvive Cancer Support,	Pocket Cancer Support,
Care for Cancer Foundation,	Rainbows and Smiles,
Childhood Cancer Foundation of South Africa (CHOC),	Reach for Recovery,
Hospice Palliative Care Association (HPCA),	The Pink Parasol Project,
Igazi Foundation,	South African Oncology Social Workers Forum,
Lymphoedema Association of South Africa (LAOSA),	The Sunflower Fund,
Look Good Feel Better,	Treatment Action Campaign (TAC),
Men's Foundation,	Vrede Foundation, and
	Wings of Hope.

### **Campaign Hashtags**

#LetsTalkAboutCancer

#AccessToMedicine

#hcsmsA

#FixPatentLaw

And tag:

@Cancer\_ZA

@FixPatentLaw

### **For more information,**

Contact Cancer Alliance Independent Advocacy Consultant Salome Meyer at 079 483 3175 or email [advocacy@canceralliance.co.za](mailto:advocacy@canceralliance.co.za) or visit [www.canceralliance.co.za](http://www.canceralliance.co.za).

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