



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



NEMLC

Position Statement on the relevance of the World Health Organization Model List of Essential Medicines for South African medicines selection processes

This statement serves to outline that, although the World Health Organization Model List of Essential Medicines (WHO Model EML) and Model Essential Medicines List for Children (EMLc) are important inputs to local selection processes, the selection of South African EML must always be based on a rigorous and transparent local process, and not merely automatic adoption of the global position.

The WHO Model EML was developed to serve as a guide for the development of both national and institutional essential medicines lists (EML). First published in 1977, the Model List has been updated regularly, and now incorporates the EMLc. The 21st Model EML and 7th EMLc were issued in 2019.

The WHO Model EML is intended to serve as a model for countries to guide the prioritising of critical healthcare products which should be made available in their healthcare systems. While a powerful tool in promoting health equity, the WHO is explicit in that its EML was not designed as a global standard. Fundamental to its application within Member States is the opportunity for individual countries and institutions to adapt the WHO Model EML and EMLc to their local needs and capacities, considering factors such as local demography and disease burden; healthcare facilities and capacity; training and experience of healthcare personnel; local registration of individual pharmaceutical products; and financial resources.

The South African National Department of Health aims to ensure equitable access to essential, good quality and affordable medicines to all citizens. The Essential Drugs Programme was established in terms of the National Drug Policy (NDP) in 1996 to achieve this objective. The National Essential Medicines List Committee (NEMLC) is appointed by the Minister of Health (MoH). Together with its Expert Review Committees, the NEMLC is responsible for regularly reviewing medicines for inclusion in the Essential Medicines Lists (EMLs) and Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs). The process followed is rigorous,

evidence-based, and includes peer review. The process takes into consideration local clinical need, evidence of safety, efficacy and quality as well as cost-effectiveness, budget impact and the implications for clinical practice in South Africa.

The WHO Model EML and NEMLC processes are inherently complementary in that they both incorporate the principles of evidence-based medicine as well as the requirement for peer-review. While the WHO Model EML and EMLc are often used as a guideline for review prioritisation, the NEMLC remains mandated to review and ratify all items prior to inclusion on the South African EML.