

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

26 June 2023

*The South African Society of Travel Medicine (SASTM), South African Paediatric Association (SAPA) and Southern African Society of Paediatric Infectious Diseases (SASPID) join hands with the South African Malaria Elimination Committee (SAMEC) and academics to prevent the stockout of malaria prophylaxis for children in the South African market ahead of the winter holiday exodus to high-risk malaria areas.*

It has come to our attention that there is an imminent stockout of the only medicine for the prevention of malaria in toddlers and young children in South Africa, as stocks of the only current supplier, AcinoSwiss, will expire by end July 2023.

This comes at a critical point when many families will be heading out to malaria endemic areas in the Lowveld and neighbouring states, e.g., Mozambique, and follows on mefloquine, the only medication suitable for babies and pregnant women who must travel to malaria risk areas, no longer being marketed in South Africa.

The only other prophylactic available in South Africa is doxycycline but this is not suitable for use in toddlers, young children (under 8 years) and in pregnancy. There have also been intermittent shortages of doxycycline in the last two years.

Malaria is the most common, preventable infectious disease cause of death in travellers in Africa. Children and pregnant women are at particular risk of contracting and dying from malaria.

Adult formulations of the tablet contain the same active ingredients, atovaquone / proguanil, remain available, but for practical and pharmaceutical reasons these tablets cannot be used in children.

Representatives of the societies and SAMEC met with AcinoSwiss, the sole supplier of Malanil® Paediatric, earlier this week, to find an urgent solution.

The company is immediately making available a supply of tablets still in stock, but with short expiry dates, at end July 2023. The tablets will be available at certain travel clinics and pharmacies.

Potential solutions discussed for once that stock expires, include urgently bringing to market generic tablets already registered in South Africa and / or the importation of alternative generics. New formulations would have to be approved by the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA), a process that can take months. An ad hoc steering committee offered to engage with SAHPRA to request speeding up the review process once a potential supplier is identified.

As an interim measure, South Africans are advised not to travel to high-risk malaria areas if travelling with young children, unless travel is unavoidable. If travel cannot be deferred at all, travellers should make strict use of all measures to avoid mosquito bites at all times and seek URGENT, expert medical attention for anyone with the symptoms of a 'flu-like illness, namely fever, headache, cold shivers, nausea and vomiting, muscle and joint pain. These signs and symptoms may be difficult to detect in babies and young children, increasing the risk of a delayed diagnosis and death.

## **About SASTM**

The South African Society of Travel Medicine (SASTM) represents approximately 500 travel health practitioners in South(ern) Africa. Our mission is to guide the profession in all aspects relating to the practice of travel medicine, liaise with the travel industry, consult with relevant authorities, advise the public and collaborate nationally and internationally on all aspects relating to Travel Medicine.

Our goals include:

- To promote excellence in the practice of Travel Medicine,
- To act as a local and international reference body on Travel Medicine.
- To serve as an advisory body on Travel Medicine to the South African Department of Health.
- To facilitate local and international collaboration in the field of Travel Medicine.
- To promote, facilitate and accredit the education of health care professionals in the practise of Travel Medicine.
- To prepare technical guidelines on Travel Medicine.
- To encourage excellence in appropriate research and professional publication in Travel Medicine

## **About SAPA**

The South African Paediatric Association's mission is to promote and protect the health of children. SAPA seeks to serve and unite paediatricians, parents, policy makers and children. This is achieved through advocacy for the rights of children, education, and facilitating collaborations with those who share these ideals.

## **About SASPID**

The aims of Southern African Society of Paediatric Infectious Diseases include:

- To advance the understanding of paediatric infectious diseases
- To promote the exchange of information relating to all aspects of paediatric infectious diseases
- To promote the development and exchange of knowledge, information, and ideas in support of the prevention and control of hospital and community-associated paediatric infections

## **About SAMEC**

The South African Malaria Elimination Committee (SAMEC) is a technical advisory committee to the National Department of Health on matters related to advancing malaria elimination. SAMEC includes experts in epidemiology, case management and chemoprophylaxis, vector control, surveillance, health promotion, programme management and other relevant areas.

### **For inquiries, please contact**

- SASTM: [admin@sastm.org.za](mailto:admin@sastm.org.za)
- Medicines Information Centres for Healthcare professionals: e.g. UCT MIC (021 406 6829) or Amayeza-info (011 475 2994)
- For pharmacists to locate available stock: AcinoSwiss (011 516 1700)