

SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY OF PSYCHIATRISTS POSITION STATEMENT:

EVIDENCE BASED PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY: the treatment of psychiatric disorders with medication.

The SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY OF PSYCHIATRISTS (SASOP) takes note that the use of medication in the treatment of psychiatric disorders has recently been highlighted by a case of a psychiatrist reported to the HPCSA. SASOP cannot comment on the details of this case, as it is *sub judice*. SASOP however would like to place the following on record:

SASOP confirms the following principles for the evidence based treatment of psychiatric disorders with medication:

1. Psychiatric disorders are some of the most disabling conditions that can befall any person. Modern psychiatric practice consists of acceptable treatment of these disorders with various methods, including the prescription of medication and psychotherapy.
2. Treatments should be ***evidence based***: this term refers to the fact that medication is prescribed to a patient only after an accurate diagnosis has been made. Furthermore, the choice of medication is guided by the research evidence on the particular disorder that has been published in reputable and peer reviewed scientific psychiatry journals.
3. Furthermore, a particular medication for use in a particular disorder is registered for this indication with the MEDICINES CONTROL COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA. It is however acceptable to use medications outside of their registered indications if the treating psychiatrist can indicate new scientific evidence from published literature for this use in a patient with a particular disorder, where registered medications are not indicated for certain reasons.
4. The treating psychiatrist should limit combination therapy as far as possible. Combinations of medications are used but these combinations are guided by published treatment guidelines, compiled by various international and local psychiatric professional groups.
5. The patient should always give informed consent to any treatment: this implies that the treating psychiatrist should inform the patient of all medications prescribed, the reasons for prescribing them, and of any anticipated side-effects of the medication.
6. The treating psychiatrist should also inform the patient of the time course of the treatment, i.e. how long should the patient remain on a particular treatment and the reason for remaining on this treatment.
7. There exists a system of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) by which any psychiatrist should ensure that his or her academic knowledge on the use of medication is consistent with the latest scientific research. This system is administered by the Health Professionals Council of South Africa.
8. Psychiatrists from time to time, like all other medical professionals, encounter highly treatment resistant disorders in their patients. These very severe disorders are difficult to treat and do not respond to standard treatments. This group of disorders require

treatment that falls outside of the standard treatment guidelines. However, the patient should at all times be informed of the fact that a particular treatment has moved beyond the standard for the profession, and give informed consent to such treatment.

The professional relationship between psychiatrist and patient is based on trust: trust that the psychiatrist will always do the best for the patient in diagnosis, medication treatment and psychotherapy.

SASOP has created a system of peer review in which the practices of its members can be examined by peers and in which the rights and best interests of patients are protected.

**COMPILED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN
SOCIETY OF PSYCHIATRISTS**