MEDIA RELEASE

SAHPRA aware of illicit bulk sales of codeine-containing mixtures exposed by Carte Blanche

Embargo: Immediate Release

Pretoria, 10 October 2023 – The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) participated in a Carte Blanche media interview on an ongoing investigation into the illicit bulk sale of codeine-based cough mixtures. This investigative report was broadcast on Sunday, 08 October 2023.

The report relates to illicit bulk sales of codeine-based cough mixtures perpetrated by a pharmaceutical group, and this was verified by an ongoing investigation. The individuals under investigation were exposed for violating the Medicines Act and its Regulations in terms of the type of pharmacy and the manner under which controlled substances' products were sold amongst other contraventions.

The abuse of codeine is becoming a ubiquitous practice and it is appalling when a custodian of medicines, entrusted with improving/restoring people's health, deliberately puts the lives of the public at risk and compounds the problem. It is in this vein that SAHPRA and the South African Pharmacy Council (SAPC) joined hands to get involved as this is a blatant transgression of the Medicines Act and the Pharmacy Act.

SAHPRA CEO, Dr Boitumelo Semete-Makokotlela said, "The extent and severity of the abuse of codeine-containing medicines is especially rife amongst our youth in the country. It is with this mindset that we continue to be on high alert in preventing, detecting, and responding to such unethical behaviour and the illicit sale, use or trafficking of scheduled medicines. SAHPRA will enforce its law working with the SAPC and law enforcement agencies to ensure that justice is served. We hope that this will deter any further occurrences of this nature."

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About SAHPRA:

SAHPRA is tasked with regulating (monitoring, evaluating, investigating, inspecting and registering) all health products. This includes clinical trials, complementary medicines, medical devices and in-vitro diagnostics (IVDs). Furthermore, SAHPRA has the added responsibility of overseeing radiation control in South Africa. SAHPRA's mandate is outlined in the Medicines and Related Substances Act (Act No 101 of 1965 as amended) as well as the Hazardous Substances Act (Act No 15 of 1973).

SAHPRA has three pillars to ensure that medicines, medical devices and IVDs meet the requisite standards to protect the health and well-being of all who reside in South Africa:

- Safety
- Efficacy
- Quality

It is these three pillars that define the ethos of SAHPRA.