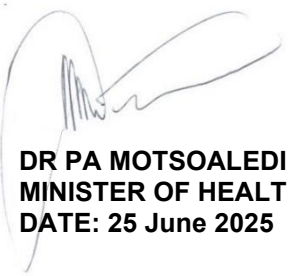
FOREWORD

I proudly present the updated 2024 editions of both the Primary Healthcare (PHC) and Adult Hospital Level (AHL) Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs) and Essential Medicines List (EML). These guidelines aim to enhance transparency and support the delivery of high-quality treatment options at both PHC and hospital levels. They reflect the evolving clinical needs of our population as well as the introduction of new medicines.

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) aims to eliminate disparities in healthcare access and outcomes, providing financial protection and access to quality healthcare for all South Africans, as mandated by the constitution of South Africa. The National Essential Medicines List Committee (NEMLC) has incrementally increased the use of Health Technology Assessment processes in the selection of essential medicines, providing transparent priority-setting and value-based guidance for efficient resource allocation. The PHC and AHL STGs and EML are a key pillar of UHC, laying the groundwork for structuring health service benefits and ensuring equitable access to safe, effective and affordable medicines for all.

I commend the diligent work of the PHC and AHL Expert Review Committee (ERC), along with the NEMLC, in developing the 2024 editions of the PHC and AHL STGs and EML according to good governance and evidence-based decision principles.

I encourage stakeholders across all sectors to actively participate in the continuous review, development and implementation of these guidelines. I encourage engagement with the NEMLC process of STG development through the external comment process. I appreciate your engagement in presentations and webinars hosted by the NDoH, as well as dissemination of communication published on the National Department of Health web page. Your active involvement is crucial for the successful implementation of these STGs and the improvement of health outcomes for our nation.



DR PA MOTSOALEDI, MP
MINISTER OF HEALTH
DATE: 25 June 2025

INTRODUCTION

The Primary Healthcare (PHC) and Adult Hospital Level (AHL) Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs) and Essential Medicines List (EML) enable the equitable access to safe, effective and affordable essential medicines across South Africa.

Historically, the PHC and AHL Expert Review Committees (ERCs) responsible for developing the PHC and AHL STGs were appointed as separate Committees. However, in 2020 the Committees were merged to streamline efforts and optimise resources, ensuring a seamless continuum of care between the PHC and AHL of care. The review cycle for these STGs commenced at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitating a shift in priorities to address emerging needs and challenges faced by the healthcare system during the pandemic.

The ERC reviews the STGs and EML according to a topic prioritisation framework that includes consideration of clinical need, efficacy, safety, cost-effectiveness, feasibility and equity, presenting recommendations to the National Essential Medicines List Committee (NEMLC) for appraisal and ratification. The multidisciplinary team, which includes clinical experts, clinical pharmacologists and evidence-review and guideline-development methodologists has strengthened the STG development process. The National Department of Health's Essential Drugs Programme team supports this process and has ensured collaboration and alignment with other advisory groups in updating these guidelines.

The NEMLC has incorporated the latest advances in clinical care into various disorder and chapter updates, expanding medicine treatment options including (but not limited to) Blood and Blood-Forming Organs, HIV, Mental Health, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, as well as Palliative Care. Notably, the AHL STGs and EML features a new chapter on Adult Critical Care, developed through extensive consultation across both public and private sectors. This chapter aims to enhance our response capabilities and ensure comprehensive care for critically ill patients.

The 2024 editions of the PHC and AHL STGs and EML reflects the National Department of Health's commitment to continually evolving and enhancing the quality and accessibility of healthcare across our country.



DR SSS BUTHELEZI
DIRECTOR-GENERAL: HEALTH
DATE: 11 June 2025