

25 March 2024

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Chief Direct: Sector Wide Procurement
For: DIRECTOR: HEALTH
Department of Health
tenders@health.gov.za

Re: HP06-2024SVP: SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF SMALL VOLUME PARENTERALS AND INSULIN DEVICES TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH FOR THE PERIOD 01 MAY 2024 TO 30 APRIL 2027

The Society for Endocrinology, Metabolism and Diabetes of South Africa (SEMDSA), notes with great concern the contract circular HP06-2024SVP. The circular which details insulin options for people living with diabetes in State care has a distinct lack of insulin pen options for items 72 / 74 / 76 (human based short acting, basal and premixed insulins). Whilst the new tender does have an analogue basal insulin in a pen format (Optisulin), the cost of short acting analogue insulin (Apidra) in a penset is prohibitive. There is no option for any premix insulin in a pen format.

There are a number of difficulties in the administration and use of insulin vials and syringes; particularly in respect of vulnerable groups.

Specifically, we draw your attention to the following concerns for the health and well-being of patients with diabetes:

1. The use of vials and syringes can lead to dosing errors which may in some instances have fatal consequences.
2. The management of diabetes in children and the elderly is challenging and the use of vials and syringes exacerbates these challenges.
3. Patients with physical disabilities such as poor vision, arthritis, etc and those requiring the assistance of other persons to administer insulin are at great risk should they be compelled to rely on vials and syringes for their insulin needs.

Incorrect management of insulin doses can and will lead to long term complications. These complications will negatively impact the patient's quality of life and lead to costly treatment being necessary. In the worst-case scenario, incorrect dose administration can have fatal consequences.

Given the numerous challenges associated with the use of vials and syringes, it would clearly be preferable to make use of disposable or reusable pens. To ensure an acceptable level of patient care, we urge the Department to source and consider alternative companies that are in a position to supply such disposable or reusable pens.

We remain available to discuss this matter with you but impress upon you the urgency of this issue. Patients who are in need of insulin will be negatively impacted by this almost immediately after 1 May 2024.

We trust this matter will receive your most urgent attention and we look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully,

SEMDSA Executive Committee