

MTCTP Pamphlet

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Mother-to-Child Transmission Prevention Pamphlet Distributed in Cape Town

Nevirapine/AZT for Pregnant Women with HIV Now!

Only 40 in every 100 women with HIV will pass the virus on to their babies during and after birth. This can be reduced by half with medicine. The government can implement a Mother-to-Child-Transmission-Prevention (MTCTP) programme that will prevent 2500 babies a month from contracting HIV. Children with HIV get sick much more often and suffer tremendously. In that time, their mother may also get ill and be denied proper healthcare. This must stop.

What Medicines can be Used to Prevent Mother-to-Child-Transmission of HIV?

These are the different medicines available to reduce the risk of HIV transmission from a mother to her child.

AZT

Scientific studies from around the world and Africa show that AZT reduces the chance of a mother transmitting the virus to her child by half.

AZT is one of the oldest available treatments for HIV and all its side-effects have been studied. A short course for prevention does not have any lasting side-effects on mother or child.

Nevirapine (NVP)

Scientific evidence from Uganda and South Africa shows that NVP is cheaper and easier to use than AZT, and it is as effective. NVP has one disadvantage over AZT. Like AZT, it is one of the medicines that can be used to treat all people with HIV. However, in some cases pregnant mothers who take NVP for MTCTP may not be able to use it again. Some can use it again after two years.

This is called drug resistance. This limits the treatment options available to the mother. However, there are alternatives.

Why must the Government Implement an MTCTP programme?

Constitutional Reasons

- The Constitution says that the government has a duty to respect and preserve human life. It also says that all women have a right to make choices about bearing children. Crucially, the government has a duty to provide everyone with access to health care within its budget.
- Treating pregnant women with HIV with NVP or AZT will definitely reduce the HIV infection rate in South Africa and save thousands of lives.

Moral Reason

- The majority of women and children affected are poor and black. To deny them access to medication says that the lives of poor, black women are cheap. This is immoral.

Economic Reasons

- A University of Cape Town study has shown that preventing babies from getting HIV is cheaper than the hospital and medical costs that would be incurred if an MTCTP program is not implemented.
- The state loses approximately R800m a year by failing to prevent HIV in babies.
- Implementing MTCTP will only cost the state approximately R80 million a year, about 1% of the total health budget.
- Implement an MTCTP Programme Now!

TAC demands that the government immediately implement a programme to prevent mother-to-child-transmission of HIV.

This programme must be implemented in the five most affected provinces at primary healthcare level.