Enhancing Collaboration for HIV/AIDS-Related Pharmaceutical Management in East, Central, and Southern Africa: Establishing a Regional Pharmaceutical Forum

Introduction

Countries in the East, Central, and Southern Africa (ECSA) region are struggling to manage their health care systems in the context of the expanding HIV/AIDS epidemic. The unrelenting and vast capacity that characterizes most pharmaceutical and commodity management systems in the region undermine countries’ ability to combat HIV/AIDS with antiretrovirals and medications for treating opportunistic infections, pharmaceuticals that have dramatically improved quality of life and outcomes for patients in the developed world. Another obstacle is the lack of a central, regional mechanism for sharing information on pharmaceuticals, especially those relevant to the management of HIV/AIDS and related infections. These factors affect the quality of health care—and the quality of life—for people in the region.

Creation of the Regional Pharmaceutical Forum

To address these problems, the Commonwealth Regional Health Community (CRHC) established a regional advisory committee, the Regional Pharmaceutical Forum (RPF). The RPF works with collaborators, including the Management Sciences for Health (MSH), Rational Pharmaceutical Management (RPM) Plus Program (funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID]), to implement strategies for improving access to quality pharmaceuticals and other medical supplies.

The following steps are critical to the RPF’s successful creation—

• Discussion and confirmation of objectives, functions, and terms of reference
• Identification of appropriate RPF members
• Appointment of a coordinator/focal person and member-state contacts
• Establishment of technical working groups
• Development and implementation of business plans, funding plans, and work plans
• Assistance to member states in implementing reforms necessary for collaboration
• Adoption of a consensus building

The RPF was launched in August 2003. Its main goal is to provide CRHC member states with technical leadership and support as they move to improve access to high-quality, affordable pharmaceuticals and other health commodities. The RPF’s specific objectives are to—

• Help strengthen pharmaceutical management systems in member states, which in turn would improve quality of life
• Help strengthen regional and in-country mechanisms to assure the quality of medicines in the region
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RPF’s specific objectives are to—

• Help bring about several major benefits—
  1. Improved access to and use of pharmaceuticals in member states, which in turn would improve quality of life
  2. Strengthened pharmaceutical management systems of member states
  3. Establishment of a regional mechanism for coordinating regional pharmaceutical and commodity management activities, as expected to bring about several major benefits—
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RPF Organizational Structure

For more information please contact—

Web: www.msh.org/spmpacs
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Commonwealth Regional Health Community

For more information please contact—

Web: www.msh.org/spmpacs
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RPF Organizational Structure

DJCC
RPF

Collaborators

RPF Secretariat

PQA-TWG
TDI-TWG
HIV-TWG
PSD-TWG

Expectations

In summary, the establishment of the RPF, a central mechanism for coordinating regional pharmaceutical and commodity management activities, is expected to bring about several major benefits—

• Strengthened pharmaceutical management systems of member states
• Establishment of a regional mechanism for coordinating regional pharmaceutical and commodity management activities, as expected to bring about several major benefits—
• Improved access to and use of pharmaceuticals in member states, which in turn would improve quality of life