

Recovering drug addicts to get drugs supplementing methadone



The government is set to introduce two new drugs to help supplement Methadone which is used by recovering addicts. The two drugs, buprenorphine and naltrexone, will be rolled out in June. Buprenorphine, just like methadone, is used to treat addiction to opioids like heroin as it produces the same side effects that include respiratory depression and euphoria (a feeling of being high and happy). Naltrexone, on the other hand, is used to treat extreme withdrawal side effects of alcohol. Read more at: <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/health/article/2001271841/recovering-drug-addicts-to-get-drugs-supplementing-methadone>.

National Aids and STI Control Programmes (Nascop) Manager in charge of Key Populations Helgar Musyoki confirmed that the government is at procurement stage on how to buy the two drugs. Without disclosing the cost, Musyoki said the the drugs are more expensive compared to methadone as they have less side effects and are taken for just six months compared to methadone that one may take for a lifetime depending on level of addiction She said they are already effective in Europe, United States and Mauritius where they have borrowed the idea. “We are at procurement and planning stage at the moment. Usually government procurement takes like six months so we hope by June-July we will roll them out,” said Musyoki during the first ever Harm Reduction conference for East Africa that aims to reduce the prevalence of the two disease among drugs users. But not all the 2, 800 injecting drug users will benefit. Musyoki said the government has set strict guidelines on persons to benefit which should be adhered to by community mobilisers. Some 400, recovering addicts have been chosen to pilot the roll out programme. “It will not be given to just anyone. Those who will benefit

should not have defaulted their methadone dosage and a urine test will be done to certify their eligibility,” she said. This is because unlike methadone where the recovering addict would have to avail themselves to the facility every day, for the two drugs, they will be allowed to go with them home. There are at least 18,000 injecting drug users but the number is estimated to be 23,000 at most. A mapping survey is however being done in 34 counties to tally the number which Musyoki said, may turn out to be more. The government currently spends Sh60 million on methadone treatment every year to about 1,000 drug users. The rest of the funding is boosted by donors. Apart from methadone, there is also a programme of distributing syringes and needles to drug users where at least each drug user is supplied with 200 (needles and syringes) every year. The practice is meant to avoid sharing of needles so as to reduce the risk of spreading HIV virus. However, taking of the substitute treatment drugs (like methadone) through Medical Assisted Therapy further reduces chances of injections as they are in tablet form.

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