# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 122**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 08 FEBRUARY 2018**

**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 01)**

**Ms C King (DA) to ask the Minister of Health:**

Whether, with reference to the research conducted by the University of Cape Town’s molecular endrinologist which found that the contraceptive Depro Provera increases the risk of HIV, his department has conducted its own study to find out whether the synthetic hormone could affect the body’s immune system and increase the risk of contracting HIV; if not, why not; if so, what were the findings?

###### NW128E

**REPLY:**

The National Department of Health is aware of the study that was published in January 2018 which were based on animal studies. The possibility of DMPA being associated with HIV acquisition has been discussed by the World Health Organisation since 2012. South African experts have been part of these discussions. The studies presented at meetings of the World Health Organisation were not based on randomised clinical trials but on observational studies. In order to get conclusive evidence that DMPA definitely facilitates HIV acquisition, a number of donors, with the support of the National Department of Health commissioned the ‘Evidence for Contraceptive Options and HIV Outcomes’ Study (ECHO) in 2016 with results expected in 2019.

As well, in April 2017, the Department convened a group of experts in contraception to review the data on DMPA and HIV acquisition. These experts recommended the following: (a) that women must be provided with the full range of contraceptives and they must be counselled on the advantages and disadvantages of each to enable them to make the best possible decision; and that (b) regardless of which contraceptive method women chose, they must be informed about the importance of dual protection – this means consistent use of male or female condoms together with a contraceptive of their choice. This reinforced the policy decision taken earlier and included in the National Contraception and Fertility Planning Policy and Service Delivery Guidelines which the Department has been implementing since 2014.

The Department is committed to continue to monitor the research as well as World Health Organisation guidance on the use of DMPA and take appropriate decisions based on evidence.

END.