# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 2054**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 20)**

**Ms N N Chirwa (EFF) to ask the Minister of Health:**

Whether he has been informed of the development of an anti-COVID-19 prevention pill; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details on the (a) benefits of the product and (b) current status on its use, approval and accessibility?

###### NW2454E

**REPLY:**

It is unclear what is meant by the term “anti-COVID-19 prevention pill”. Currently, the antiviral medicines available in oral dosage forms (“pills”) are intended to be used for the treatment of COVID-19, not for prevention.

The National Essential Medicines List (NEML) Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) on COVID-19 Therapeutics has reviewed the available evidence for two oral antiviral products, molnupiravir and ritonavir-boosted nirmatrelvir. All rapid reviews are accessible from the National Department of Health website and are routinely updated when new evidence becomes available. Currently, the NEML MAC on COVID-19 Therapeutics does not recommend the use of either molnupiravir or ritonavir-boosted nirmatrelvir in the treatment of patients diagnosed with COVID-19. Both of these medicines need to be used within five days of the onset of COVID-19 symptoms. They may also not be used during pregnancy, so women of childbearing potential would need access to effective contraception. Neither of these medicines has yet been registered in South Africa, by either the innovator manufacturers or generic producers. The NEML MAC on COVID-19 Therapeutics will continue to monitor the situation in terms of availability and pricing, as well as emerging evidence, and will update the reviews as necessary.

Apart from public health and social measures (such as mask-wearing), the primary means for the prevention of COVID-19 remains vaccination. Approved COVID-19 vaccines are available for all persons aged 12 years and older, and the evidence for their use in younger children is currently being reviewed.

END.