# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 3062**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 51)**

**Dr S S Thembekwayo (EFF) to ask the Minister of Health:**

Whether there has been any shortage of psychiatric medication in the Republic since the outbreak of the coronavirus; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, (a) how serious is the shortage and (b) what steps has he taken to ensure that the wellbeing of psychiatric patients is not compromised?

###### NW3891E

**REPLY:**

The medicine supply chain is long and complex, with interruptions at any point in the supply chain affecting medicine availability at the facility. These interruptions may relate to, inter alia, the shortage of the active ingredients, regulatory issues affecting formulation, logistical challenges, inadequate volumes produced relative to the ordered quantity and inadequate quantities being ordered. Medicine shortages is a global problem affecting all countries for the reasons outlined above.

South Africa has experienced constrained supply of psychiatric medicines. The challenges precede the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. The reason for the shortage of each drug differs and includes a shortage of the active pharmaceutical ingredient, the manufacturer is unable to supply ordered quantities within the contracted timelines, production problems, and industrial action at local production facilities.

(a) The shortages are considered to be very serious.

(b) Steps taken in mitigation include sourcing of stock from alternative suppliers, where possible, as well as the issuing of circulars recommending use of available alternative agents that are considered to be therapeutically equivalent. Where partial deliveries are made by contracted suppliers availability is managed at the district level through stock rotation among facilities.

The supply issues related to the availability of *Citalopram and Fluoxetine;* have been resolved*.* However, South Africa is experiencing shortages of four drugs (Amitriptyline, Chlorpromazine, Haloperidol and Olanzapine).

END.