

Warning against illegal sale of hearing aids

PRETORIA: The Speech, Language and Hearing Professional Board of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) has warned the public against purchasing hearing aids or amplifiers directly from retail pharmacies and other non-registered persons.



This follows complaints received by the board concerning the dispensing and selling of hearing aids to the general public by unregistered people working at certain national pharmacies and retailers.

Chairperson of the Professional Board for Speech, Language and Hearing professions, Professor Shajila Singh warned that not only are these pharmacies acting in contravention of the law, but these amplifiers could cause irreversible hearing loss to normal hearing members of the public.

Singh said that in their advertising, hearing aids are dispensed by trained nurses.

"These nurses, who do not fall under the ambit of the HPCSA, are placing the public at risk by illegally administering treatment for clinically unproven hearing problems by supplying unprescribed amplifiers and are as such in breach of the law and also practicing outside their scope of practice.

"The illegal dispensing of amplifiers is misleading to the public who assume that the person is attending to their hearing condition, which is not the case, as no qualified, professional consultation or hearing test can be provided by a nurse. Unprescribed amplification can damage the hearing of normal hearing individuals and such hearing loss could be irreversible," Singh said.

Singh added that this form of advertising is irresponsible and the matter has been escalated to their legal services department for further engagement with the pharmaceutical retailers and South African Nursing Council.

She urged the public to be aware of the impact of noise and increased intensity levels on hearing. "Only consult registered audiologists for professional hearing tests, should they suspect any hearing difficulty."

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