

# COHSASA & PharmAccess Foundation enter joint venture to improve patient care in disadvantaged areas

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Healthcare improvement organisations join forces to implement safety and quality standards of care in facilities in resource-poor countries.

- The joint venture introduces standards for healthcare quality and safety for facilities in resource poor settings
- Healthcare and patient standards are often severely lacking in these settings
- By developing quality standards the joint venture fulfils an urgent need
- Continuous quality improvement programmes help facilities to progressively improve their healthcare delivery

 PharmAccess  
FOUNDATION

The Council for Health Service Accreditation of Southern Africa (COHSASA) based in Cape Town, South Africa and the PharmAccess Foundation, based in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, will combine their skills and competencies to provide a full range of services that will improve the infrastructure and quality of care in a wide range of healthcare facilities. "The combination of PharmAccess-COHSASA will create a new entity with a stronger team and a strengthened ability to assist in the improvement of healthcare facilities in Africa", emphasises Professor Stuart Whittaker, Chief Executive Officer of COHSASA.

The aim of the new COHSASA-PharmAccess joint venture (to be called COHSASA) will be to help facilities in developing countries to reach compliance with safe and acceptable standards of health service delivery. "The joint venture raises the bar for medical quality in resource poor settings," says Professor Tobias Rinke de Wit, Director Advocacy, Technology and Research of PharmAccess; "a critical step in these surroundings where quality criteria are so often non-existent, not implemented or not adhered to."

COHSASA will train clinics and hospitals to meet quality standards and patient safety requirements. This will enable them to meet the clinical and social needs of the patients, to fulfil the professional needs of staff and to support the community health needs and concerns. Programmes are currently running in Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, Botswana, Swaziland, Rwanda and South Africa.

## The need for healthcare standards in Africa

Many sub-Saharan countries struggle to meet their citizens' healthcare needs and to provide a satisfactory level of care, particularly in the rural areas. The public sector, in particular, has insufficient qualified staff, a shortage of beds, equipment and medicine and long waiting times. To put this in perspective: according to the World Health Organisation, Africa has only 3% of the health workforce and represents less than 1% of total worldwide healthcare expenditure, while it carries 24% of the global burden of diseases. (*World Health Organization. Working Together for Health: World Health Report 2006. Geneva, Switzerland; 2006.*)

People often turn to private facilities which provide around 50% of all the care on the continent. However, private healthcare provision is often not regulated, leading to uncertainty about quality, profit margins and unrealistic cost increases for medical care. Better standards and most certainly minimal standards in both the public and the private sector are thus needed to answer the growing need for quality basic health care. Evaluation systems are needed to provide direction and to monitor safety and quality of care in both sectors.

## Background on the organisations

COHSASA has been working in the field of quality improvement in Southern African healthcare facilities for 15 years. It has developed, in association with professional bodies and associations, healthcare facility standards for primary health care, hospitals, HIV/AIDS services and hospice and palliative care services, each accredited by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua). It has also developed precise and comprehensive IT tools that identify deficiencies and provide quality improvement plans specific for participating facilities in the range from primary healthcare clinics to large, academic hospitals. COHSASA has achieved global recognition and is one of only 16 internationally accredited healthcare accrediting bodies worldwide that are recognised by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua).

PharmAccess Foundation is a Dutch not-for-profit organization dedicated to the strengthening of health systems in sub-Saharan Africa. Its ultimate goal is to improve access to quality basic health care including the treatment of HIV/AIDS. PharmAccess supports programmes and offers services in the areas of medical and administrative capacity building, health insurance, HIV/AIDS prevention and care in workplaces, medical loan provision, health investments and health intelligence. Since its inception in 2001 PharmAccess has pioneered innovative approaches for health financing, data capture, infrastructure and quality improvement. PharmAccess works closely with the public and private health sector, aiming to alleviate the healthcare burden of African governments through the establishment of public-private partnerships. PharmAccess partners with local organizations in Africa.

## For the Press

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### COHSASA



The Council for Health Service Accreditation of Southern Africa (COHSASA), a not-for-profit organisation in Cape Town, South Africa, assists a wide range of healthcare facilities to meet and maintain quality standards.

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