

Antiretroviral shortages still plague clinics

It seems that the public healthcare sector is still battling to get the basics right, and despite huge inroads being made in treating HIV and TB, the supply of antiretrovirals and other necessary drugs to clinics remains a problem.



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An annual survey by [Stop Stockouts](#) revealed that a quarter of the 2,804 clinics polled in 2015 said they had experienced a shortage of drugs in the previous three months. Mpumalanga and Gauteng have the most stockouts of HIV and TB medicines.

Survey results

The clinics were contacted by phone during the last three months of 2015, and asked:

- If they had any shortages of HIV antiretroviral (ARV) and tuberculosis (TB) drugs in the past three months.
- if they had ARV and TB drugs immediately available.

If they had three routine child vaccines, as well as seven other essential medicines immediately available.

The data collected indicated that the situation had not improved much from the 2013 and 2014 surveys.

Mpumalanga (58% of clinics), Gauteng (39%), and Free State (36%) provinces had the highest reports of ARV and TB drug shortages, a substantial increase from last year's results. Only 9% of clinics in the Western Cape reported any ARV and TB drug outages. However, that was an increase from 4% in 2014. Limpopo improved the most, with only 12% of clinics reporting outages, compared to 29% last year.

Shortages of TB and ARV medication are especially concerning, as the treatment requires a strict regimen to be effective. Disruptions increase the chances for patients' infections becoming resistant to the drugs, and failing to work. This can mean those patients then have to switch to more expensive or less effective treatments, often with worse side effects.

Source: [AllAfrica](#)

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