



Doctor who promoted unproven sex gel loses court case against the SA HIV Clinicians Society

Defending the scientific method for the benefit of SA patients: Part of the work of the Southern African HIV Clinicians Society includes constant efforts to debunk non-proven HIV "cures" and emphasise the importance of offering patients therapies that have been tested according to rigorous standards. This evidence-based approach to their work is highlighted by a recent court ruling which found in favour of the Society in its legal battle with the doctor who promoted a product marketed as Dr Hugh's Dermo Blue Pre-sex Protection Gel, which claimed to prevent HIV infection. The Society previously informed clinicians and patients that the gel was untested and not proven to work, and explained the steps it had taken to ensure that the product was withdrawn from the market. This ultimately led to the doctor suing the Society for defamation.

In a judgment handed down on Wednesday, 15 March 2017, the High Court ruled in favour of the Society.

The Society is relieved and satisfied with the outcome. Part of the Society's mandate is to provide doctors with the evidence that they need to give patients the best possible quality of care. Part of safeguarding patients is preventing the sale and use of untested products. Such products, whether they are marketed as HIV cures or ways of preventing HIV infection, could encourage people to feel safe under false pretences and thus put them at risk, and even cause harmful side effects. The Society reiterates the importance of taking HIV medication or using HIV prevention methods that have been thoroughly evaluated according to the highest scientific standards. This is the only way to ensure that those who seek medical care are protected.

Society board member Professor Yunus Moosa says, "People who feel that they are at risk or fear for their health can be very vulnerable and thus fall prey to those selling quick-fixes or untested remedies. The Society plays a crucial role in ensuring that these patients aren't taken advantage of and receive the best care possible." Society President Dr Francesca Conradie agrees: "The Society aims to advance evidence-based interventions, whether for prevention or treatment. We will continue to work as advocates for those affected by HIV. This ruling is fantastic news for us."

For more information on the court case, or the work that the Society does, please contact Society CEO Lauren Jankelowitz on lauren@sahivsoc.org or go to www.sahivsoc.org.

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