

To: Prof. O A Ayo-Yusuf, Director
Sefako Makgatho Health Science University
Molotlegi Street
Ga-Rankuwa, Pretoria, Gauteng

Cc: Dr. Glenda Gray, President and CEO, South African Medical Research Council
Prof. Prem Govender, Director of Research, Sefako Makgatho Health Science University
Prof. Akhter Goolam-Mahomed, University of Limpopo

30 August 2016

OPEN LETTER: Urgent action required to end bureaucratic delays and expedite enrollment of the NExT study

Dear Prof Ayo-Yusuf,

As a group of tuberculosis (TB) treatment and research activists, we closely follow the progress of key research and initiatives to improve TB care. As such, we have been eagerly awaiting full enrollment and eventual results of the NExT trial to shorten treatment of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB). We are writing to you today to encourage Sefako Makgatho Health Science University's urgent action on its ability to resolve delays to the enrollment of the extremely important NExT trial.

The NExT trial will answer critical questions regarding the optimal use of new TB drug bedaquiline, and shortened treatment for MDR-TB. These answers are vital to improving the health of South Africans and people worldwide. To the credit of participating institutions and their staff, and despite numerous hurdles, the NExT trial has opened to enrollment. However, we understand that the study is accruing at a slow rate due to administrative delays releasing the South African Medical Research Council funding dedicated for the NExT study, which is tied up in the transition from the University of Limpopo to the Sefako Makgatho Health Science University. These funds must immediately be made available to the NExT study's implementers and sites.

The failure of the University of Limpopo and the Sefako Makgatho Health Science University to expeditiously release funds granted in support of the NExT trial is egregious, unethical, and unacceptable. **We demand the immediate release and return of these funds to the South African Medical Research Council for their re-allocation to institutions that are actually contributing to the NExT trial.** Failure to do so will serve as a clear indicator to donors and funding agencies of your institutions' lack of credibility as a research institution and potential recipient of funding in the future.

Before September 7th, we look forward to a response that includes the University's stated commitment to immediately returning all funds granted in support of the NExT trial to the South African Medical Research Council.

Sincerely,



Wim Vandeveld
On behalf of the Global TB Community Advisory Board