

Responses to Spotlight questions on Liposomal Amphotericin B (17 August 2026)

-Is the drug liposomal amphotericin B, used to treat cryptococcal meningitis currently available in the public sector?

Yes. Liposomal amphotericin B is included in the 2024 Adult Hospital Level Standard Treatment Guidelines and Essential Medicines List (STGs/EML) for the management of cryptococcal meningitis. The 2024 STGs/EML added both liposomal amphotericin B and oral flucytosine for the management of cryptococcal meningitis.

The applicable STGs and EML, including the 2024 Adult Hospital Level STGs/EML, are available on the National Department of Health website.

-If it is available, how is it being supplied? Via a tender or other procurement method?

Liposomal amphotericin B is currently procured through the National Department of Health's HP02-2025AI contract for the supply and delivery of anti-infective medicines for the period 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2028.

Under this contract, Item 102, "Liposomal amphotericin B for injection containing 50 mg amphotericin B, 1 vial", was awarded to Key Oncologics (Pty) Ltd for an estimated 166,056 vials.

-If it is not available in the public sector, are there/have there ever been any plans to procure liposomal amphotericin B for the public sector?

Not applicable. Liposomal amphotericin B is included in the EML and is currently procured under a national contract.

-Who is the supplier or pharmaceutical manufacturer of liposomal amphotericin B to the country?

Key Oncologics (Pty) Ltd is the applicant and contracted supplier to the National Department of Health. The product awarded under the current contract is AmBisome 50 mg, of which the originator is Gilead.

-Has liposomal amphotericin B ever been supplied via a tender? If so, please provide the details around this.

Yes. Liposomal amphotericin B has been procured through the National Department of Health's anti-infective medicine tenders for a number of contract cycles.

Under the previous HP02-2023AI contract, covering the period 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2025, Item 105 was awarded to Key Oncologics (Pty) Ltd for an estimated 5,860 vials. The contracted price was R600 per vial.

Under the current HP02-2025AI contract, effective from 1 October 2025, Item 102 was awarded for an estimated 166,056 vials at R1,167.48 per vial.

-Have there been issues with stockouts or lack of availability of liposomal amphotericin B? If so, at what dates did these stockouts occur, what was the cause and how long did these last?

There was a period of intermittent supply following the inclusion and expanded use of liposomal amphotericin B in the 2024 Adult Hospital Level STGs/EML. The change in the recommended treatment regimen resulted in a significant increase in demand for the product, requiring the supplier to adjust production and supply volumes.

The intermittent supply issue was subsequently resolved. The Department continues to monitor supply and demand closely to support uninterrupted availability of the product.

-Has there ever been an agreement with the drug manufacturer Gilead about affordable access to liposomal amphotericin B in South Africa? If so, please provide the details around this agreement and if it is still in place?

South Africa previously accessed Gilead's AmBisome product through Key Oncologics (Pty) Ltd under the Gilead Access Programme in connection with the HP02-2023AI contract.

Under the previous HP02-2023AI contract, the price of liposomal amphotericin B was R600 per 50 mg vial.

The R600 price was considered as part of the National Essential Medicines List Committee (NEMLC) assessment that supported the inclusion of liposomal amphotericin B in the 2024 Adult Hospital Level EML for cryptococcal meningitis. The NEMLC evidence review records that the reduction in price to R600 per vial was an important factor in the updated cost analysis supporting the recommendation.

Under the current HP02-2025AI contract, effective 1 October 2025, the awarded price was R1,167.48 per vial for an estimated 166,056 vials.

The Department understands that Gilead and Key Oncologics advised that South Africa was no longer eligible for the previous Gilead Access Programme pricing because a generic alternative had subsequently been registered with SAHPRA. The Department is unable to independently substantiate the commercial terms or eligibility criteria of the Gilead Access Programme from publicly available information and therefore does not wish to speculate on these aspects.

-Has there ever been an agreement with the company Key Oncologics to supply liposomal amphotericin B to the public sector at an affordable price?

Yes. Key Oncologics has supplied liposomal amphotericin B to the public sector through the NDoH national tender process. Under HP02-2023AI, the contracted price was R600 per vial as part of the Gilead Access Programme.

-Is there anything you would like to add?

The National Department of Health recognises the importance of ensuring sustainable and affordable access to liposomal amphotericin B for the management of cryptococcal meningitis.

Following engagement with Key Oncologics and Gilead, Key Oncologics subsequently agreed to a voluntary price reduction under the current contract, reducing the price from R1,167.48 to R1,035 per vial.

The Department continues to engage suppliers and monitor procurement, demand and availability to support uninterrupted access to this important medicine.