

CHALLENGES CONFRONTING HEALTH CARE WORKERS IN GOVERNMENT'S ARV ROLLOUT: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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SUMMARY

South Africa is renowned for having a progressive Constitution with strong protection of human rights, including protection for persons using the public health system. While significant recent discourse and jurisprudence have focused on the rights of patients, the situation and rights of providers of health care services have not been adequately ventilated. This paper attempts to foreground the position of the human resources personnel located at the centre of the roll-out of the government's ambitious programme of anti-retroviral (ARV) therapy.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic represents a major public health crisis in our country and, inasmuch as various critical policies and programmes have been devised in response, the key to a successful outcome lies in the hands of the health care professionals tasked with implementing such strategies. Often pilloried by the public, our health care workers (HCWs) face an almost Herculean task of turning the tide on the epidemic. Unless the rights of HCWs are recognised and their needs adequately addressed, the best laid plans of government will be at risk.

This contribution attempts to identify and analyse the critical challenges confronting HCWs at the coalface of the HIV/AIDS treatment programme, in particular the extent to which their own rights are under threat, and offers recommendations to remedy the situation in order to ensure the successful realisation of the ARV rollout.

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