

HIV Infection Caused by Defective Condoms in South Africa

Quality Infrastructure

METROLOGY

STANDARDS

TESTING

CERTIFICATION

ACCREDITATION

QUALITY
MANAGEMENT

PROBLEM Distribution of 20 million defective condoms

In South Africa there are up to 1000 deaths every day associated with the AIDS virus and while battling the disease, the government distributed 400 million condoms gratis a year. In 2007 the health department had to withdraw 20 million condoms that had been distributed, because they did not meet the necessary safety conditions. The already vulnerable population was, thus, exposed to a significant risk of infection.

BACKGROUND Cheap condoms and no quality control

For the campaign the government split the manufacturing contract between seven companies, including Zalatex. The latter produced very low cost condoms, but they did not meet the safety requirements. Nevertheless, they got a quality certificate by the South African Agency for Standards (SABS), probably by corrupting some officials. This way the company evaded a quality control, and their unsafe condoms were distributed among the population of a county which has more than 5.5 million people infected with HIV.

SOLUTION Efficient control of quality

After detecting the fraud, new audits were conducted by the SABS. They discovered that the condoms which were distributed did not pass the tests of strength, pressure and lubrication. Consequently, the condoms had to be withdrawn. In order to guarantee and monitor an efficient control of the product's quality, certification and accreditation by an internationally recognised institution is required. Furthermore, a law needs to be established which guarantees this control on a national level in order to impede fraud and corruption.

IMPACT Guaranteed protection of the population

The eradication of AIDS is one of the biggest challenges faced by our society. In order to win this challenge, it is necessary to raise awareness among government and population. Every possible resource needs to be invested in battling this disease, like the free distribution of condoms. Here, quality infrastructure plays an essential role, as each of its components is crucial to an efficient control system, which is responsible for producing condoms of optimal quality. Thus, a well-functioning quality infrastructure guarantees an efficient consumer protection and contributes to the social welfare of the society.

SOURCES

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