



## **Joint Media Statement by SMU and M5 MediGroup on matters relating to herbal mixture for COVID-19**

**For Immediate release**

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Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) is the only dedicated health sciences university in the country. The University recognizes and respects the importance of indigenous knowledge systems and the role of traditional medicine in our health care system. Furthermore, the University values coordinated efforts in response to pandemics, including the response to the current COVID-19 pandemic. SMU is committed to maintaining the highest ethical standards and in promoting excellence in all research collaborations and partnerships, remain paramount.

During 2020, the University was approached by M5 MediGroup – a group of traditional health practitioners, to test the safety and efficacy of an herbal product prepared by M5 MediGroup and presented as a potential “alternative remedy” for SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19 infection. During January 2021, a formal collaboration was established with the M5 MediGroup and the group handed over samples of their herbal product to SMU, with the understanding that the University will follow all its ethical clearance processes to scientifically evaluate the herbal mixture for safety and efficacy.

However, it was recently reported in the press that the M5 MediGroup (Traditional Practitioners) had administered their herbal product to more than 500 COVID-19 patients from Rustenburg, Soweto, Boksburg and Limpopo and received positive feedback from their patients thereof. In the light of the above, the University and the M5 MediGroup (Traditional Practitioners) saw it fit to clarify that the process to administer the herbal product had occurred prior to the establishment of the relationship between the University and the M5 MediGroup and was done within the scope of the practice of the group of traditional health practitioners.

Within the existing partnership to test the group’s observational findings, the understanding between the two parties is that the University would develop research protocols to be approved by the SMU Research Ethics Committee (SMUREC) for testing the herbal product. Furthermore, that the University will only administer the herbal remedies or products to patients once safety has been proven and efficacy subsequently established. The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) would also have to approve the tested product before further distribution.

The University will continue to work with M5 MediGroup in promoting indigenous knowledge systems using best practices. History was indeed made when the Traditional practitioners joined hands with the scientists at SMU through the aforementioned relationship committing to contributing to solving the biggest health challenge we have faced in our time. We hereby give assurance to the public that once the University has completed these tests, a comprehensive scientific report will be provided.

\*\*\*End of Joint Statement\*\*\*

Issued by following by: **Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) and M5 MediGroup**

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