

ATTACHMENT PHARMACEUTICAL NEWS 2026

Weight-loss drugs could reshape consumer economy

From a niche treatment for type-2 diabetes to a global healthcare phenomenon, glucagon-like peptide-1 drugs, commonly known as GLP-1s, are increasingly influencing industries far beyond medicine.

“In SA, the growing use of medications such as *Ozempic* and semaglutide-based treatments is beginning to raise questions about how shifting health behaviours could affect food retailers, alcohol brands and broader consumer spending patterns.” Cheaper generic semaglutide products and oral formulations improve accessibility. International studies show GLP-1 users often spend less on food, especially sugary snacks and fast food, while shifting toward healthier, premium products. Alcohol consumption may also decline, with consumers favouring moderation and premium beverages.

Researchers are also exploring potential anti-inflammatory and longevity benefits, including reduced risks linked to ageing and dementia, which could expand their influence far beyond healthcare. - ***Business Day*** (18 May 2026)

'Pharmaceutical procurement practices are weakening localisation efforts'

Trade, Industry and Competition Minister Parks Tau said Government is prioritising pharmaceutical localisation, including vaccine producer Biovac, to strengthen industrial capacity and reduce dependence on imports. – ***Business Times*** (31 May 2026)

Minister Tau said foreign investors remain interested in the sector but warned that some funding arrangements require local companies to source products or inputs from Europe, potentially undermining domestic manufacturing goals.

Meanwhile, industry leaders warned that public procurement increasingly favours imports over locally manufactured medicines.

According to Pharmaceuticals Manufactured in SA, local manufacturers' share of public pharmaceutical tenders has fallen dramatically over the past decade, with imported products increasingly dominating contracts.

Include local producers in next tenders, demands Pharmisa

In February ***Business Day*** reported that Pharmaceuticals Made in SA (PHARMISA) is demanding that the National Department of Health (NDoH) include domestic producers in the next major medicine tenders.

The demand follows the tender controversy where established local manufacturers were ignored in the awarding of contracts for the ARV tender for HIV medicines.

Meanwhile, Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Health has challenged the NDoH's claim that it procures at least 70% of ARVs from local companies. The committee said its own assessment puts local manufacturing content closer to 30%.

At present five successful bidders - Innovata, Barrs, Emcure, Aurobindo and Viatris - are importing ARVs from India rather than manufacturing them in SA.

On 19 February the pharmaceutical company Cipla requested the High Court to set aside the Health Department's R15.5bn antiretroviral contract, alleging that it was unfairly excluded from major supply deals for the country's most widely used HIV treatment, reported **Business Day**.

Barrs and Innovata entered business rescue in December 2025.

President urged to intervene over access to lenacapavir

Civil society organisations, including the Treatment Action Campaign, are urging Pres Cyril Ramaphosa to intervene with pharmaceutical company Gilead Sciences over access to *lenacapavir*, a twice-yearly HIV prevention injection being launched in SA.

They are demanding greater supply, faster generic production and local manufacturing, saying that the planned rollout is too limited to significantly reduce new infections.

SA is expected to receive fewer than 975,000 doses over two years, far below the estimated 2m annual doses needed for major impact.

The injection has been widely hailed as a breakthrough because it offers near-complete protection against HIV infection when used as prescribed. – **Business Day** (5 June 2026)

Increasing import of medicines puts jobs at risk

Local pharmaceutical manufacturers have warned that the Department of Health's increasing reliance on imported medicines is putting jobs, industrial capacity and the country's security of medicine supply at risk. - **Business Day** (9 June 2026)

Analysis by PHARMISA indicates that local pharmaceutical manufacturers have lost significant ground in major government medicine tenders over the past decade, despite SA's localisation objectives.

Local manufacturers' share of the HIV/AIDS tender by value fell from more than 70% in 2008 to 24% in 2025, while their share by volume dropped from over 90% to 22%. In the solid-dose tender, local firms' share by volume declined from 55% in 2014 to 14% in 2026, with value share falling from 60% to 15%.

The Department of Health rejected claims that localisation is being neglected, saying procurement must balance industrial development with affordability, value for money and reliable access to essential medicines.

China overtakes the US In pharmaceutical research

According to the **Journal of the American Medical Association** the number of Chinese drug programmes has increased from 800 in 2015 to more than 6, 000 in 2024; a growth rate of over 600%.

Meanwhile, the US's share of global research declined. China officially surpassed the US in research volume in 2025, driven by faster, cheaper clinical trials, regulatory reforms and returning Western-trained scientists.

Global pharmaceutical firms are increasingly partnering with Chinese innovators, signing record licensing deals worth \$133bn in 2025.

