

'You may be looking at a fifteen-year-old label which appeared in a satirical magazine recently.' **Judge Edwin Cameron, Supreme Court of Appeal, on SAfm radio, 18 July 2000**



100 mg capsule of AZT supplied by GlaxoSmithKline for ingestion as an AIDS drug. The package insert recommends: 'A broad range of dosages (between 500mg and 1500 mg/day) have been used.' This is between 20 and 60 times as much AZT that Sigma-Aldrich warns is an exceptionally dangerous toxic chemical hazard upon accidental exposure to it.

'AZT underwent clinical trials and was introduced as a specific anti-HIV drug many years before there were any data proving that the cells of patients are able to triphosphorylate the parent compound to a level considered sufficient for its putative pharmacological action. Notwithstanding, from the evidence published since 1991 it has become apparent that no such phosphorylation takes place and thus AZT cannot possess an anti-HIV effect. However, the scientific literature does elucidate ... a number of biochemical mechanisms which predicate the likelihood of widespread, serious toxicity from use of this drug. ... Based on all these data it is difficult if not impossible to explain why AZT was introduced and still remains the most widely recommended and used anti-HIV drug. [The continued administration of AZT] either alone or in combination ... to HIV sero-positive or AIDS patients warrants urgent revision.' **Papadopoulos-Eleopoulos et al. *Current Medical Research and Opinion* 15, Supplement 1: 'A Critical Analysis of the Pharmacology of AZT and its Use in AIDS' (1999)**

'[AZT is] harmless.' **Nathan Geffen, TAC national manager; Professor Nicoli Nattrass, economics professor, director of the AIDS and Society Research Unit, University of Cape Town; and Professor Glenda Gray, co-director of the Perinatal HIV Research Unit at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, Soweto, *Nature* 441(7092): 406 (2006)**

'... the toxicity of these drugs [AZT and similar] is very low indeed.' **Professor Robin Wood, co-director of the Desmond Tutu HIV Centre at the University of Cape Town, *Health-e News*, 13 May 2005**

'The President has been gravely misinformed about the safety aspects of AZT. ... The review ordered by President Mbeki of the anti-AIDS drug is neither necessary nor justified ... there is no new data that will raise legitimate concerns about AZT's safety. ... GlaxoWellcome are a reputable company. We do not lie to people.' **Peter Moore,**

**medical director of GlaxoWellcome SA (now GlaxoSmithKline), 30 October to 12 December 1999**

'GlaxoWellcome have to be devious to take the position they do now in promoting [AZT], simply because of the weight of evidence against the use of their product.' **Martin Welz, editor and publisher, *noseweek* investigative journal, in the e.tv documentary *The Truth on AZT*, 12 December 1999**

'[AZT is] perfectly acceptable. ... It causes slight side effects ... but ... so do many medicines. ... Worries about AZT's safety surfaced in the early 1990s but have long faded.' **Joseph Perriens, director of the Care and Support division of the UN AIDS programme in Geneva, Associated Press report, 3 November 1999**

'We're making a laughing stock of ourselves. Government is discrediting the drug because it doesn't want to pay for it. But it's backfiring, because there is no evidence ... they will find nothing.' **Dr Ruben Sher, head of HIVCare International (a project of the Netcare private hospital group), *Financial Mail*, 9 November 1999**

'AZT is being singled out because government is trying to defend its decision not to provide it for mother-to-child transmission. It's pathetic; the MCC is toadying to the President. There's no medical or scientific reason whatsoever for the MCC to review the material. I'm sure the MCC will come out with a balanced report, but it's nauseating that they're even looking at it. ... In Uganda, they're winning the war against the epidemic because they had the political will to do so, not by believing in conspiracy theories.' **Professor Gary Maartens, head of the HIV/AIDS Unit, Groote Schuur Hospital, Cape Town, *Financial Mail*, 9 November 1999**

'AZT is a valuable therapeutic drug. ... To combat a fatal disease, it is perfectly acceptable to use drugs slightly more toxic than an aspirin.' **Joseph Perriens, *New York Times*, 25 November 1999**

'There is no question in the minds of scientists that the government contributes to a climate that raises the possibility that ... antiretrovirals are toxic.' **Jerry Coovadia, Head of the Department of Paediatrics and Professor of HIV-AIDS Research, Nelson R Mandela Medical School, University of KwaZulu-Natal, and chairman of the 13<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference in Durban, *Sunday Independent*, 4 June 2000**

'... there is scant medical evidence to support Mbeki's opposition to AZT.' **Mark Schoofs, Pulitzer Prize winner for 'AIDS: The Agony of Africa' in *Village Voice*, 22 December 1999**

