

Johnson & Johnson under pressure to lower cost of TB drug

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Pharmaceutical firm Johnson & Johnson (J&J) is facing renewed pressure from Doctors Without Borders (MSF) to bring down the cost of tuberculosis medicine bedaquiline to scale up the treatment of the drug-resistant strain and bring down the number of deaths recorded annually.

MSF yesterday renewed their push to have the drugs lowered to below Sh100, about half of the current price tag.

Doctors Without Borders (MSF), says its demanding this price cut "considering the joint contributions made in the development of this drug, including by MSF itself."

Those who contributed to the TB drug's development demand say on its pricing developed in over 50 years. MSF said currently, J&J charges double the price that MSF is asking - about Sh40,000 (\$400) for a six-month treatment course for countries eligible to buy the drug through the Glob-

al Drug Facility (GDF)- a TB drug and diagnostic procurement mechanism, operating out of a UN agency.

"Bedaquiline was developed using taxpayer money and contributions from the global TB community," said HIV & TB Policy Advisor for MSF's Access Campaign, Sharonann Lynch.

"Those who contributed to bedaquiline's development should have a say in how the drug is priced. We're calling on J&J to price bedaquiline at no more than \$1 per day so that it can be made available to all people with drug-resistant TB. We will not back down until the price of bedaquiline is brought down."

J&J owns the patent on the drug in many countries and has sole rights to determine in which countries the drug will be sold, MSF said.

Equity targets youth in new growth drive

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Equity Group has enhanced its funding proposition to cater for the changing needs of its dominantly youthful clientele as it sets sights on hitting the Sh1 trillion mark in assets base in the next few years.

Chief executive James Mwangi says the needs of its customers have changed to include technology-driven value addition.

"What we have done is to



NMG staff tour brewery

NAIROBI Kenya Breweries Managing Director Jane Karuku (right) takes Nation Media Group chief executive Stephen Gitagama (left), NMG Head of Corporate and Regulatory Affairs Clifford Machoka (centre) and other staff of the media company on a tour of the EABL plant in Ruatara, Nairobi, on Wednesday. --JEFF ANGOTE