South Africa Replaces Controversial Health Minister

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AIDS activists sang outside the home of Barbara Hogan, South Africa's newly appointed health minister, on September 25 as they toasted to the dismissal of her predecessor, Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, BBC reports. Tshabalala-Msimang had been dubbed "Dr. Beetroot" for advocating nutritional supplements—not antiretroviral (ARV) medications—to treat HIV/AIDS.

According to the article, more HIV-positive people live in South Africa than any other country in the world. However, Tshabalala-Msimang said that ARV drugs were too expensive and have possibly harmful side effects. As an alternative, she recommended eating large amounts of garlic and beetroot.

Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), South Africa's leading AIDS lobbying group, commended Hogan for being one of the few members of Parliament to speak out on the disease, despite former President Thabo Mbeki's failure to distribute sufficient treatment for South Africa's 5.5 million people living with HIV.

"We believe that the period of politically supported AIDS denialism has ended," TAC said in a statement.

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