



NO NEED FOR STIGMA, LET'S DISPLAY UNITY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORONAVIRUS

The fear of being labelled or given shameful names if one discloses his/her test results for Coronavirus is increasingly becoming common and has gripped many communities across the province. This is a great concern to the health sector and most particularly for the COVID-19 response.

This is simply referred to as stigmatisation; a callous act that does not embody the principles of Batho Pele, the fundamental unique identity of South African nationals. Stigmatising people also does little to assist sick people in their hour of need, instead it adds more emotional burden to the people who are directly and indirectly affected by the virus.



SOCIAL STIGMA

STIGMA in the context of Health is when a person is labelled by their illness and they are no longer seen as an individual but as part of a stereotyped group. Negative attitudes and beliefs toward this group create prejudice which leads to negative actions and discrimination.

In an Outbreak, this may mean that people are labelled, stereotyped, discriminated against, treated separately and experience loss of status because of a perceived link

with a disease. Social stigma is often associated with exclusion.

The current COVID-19 outbreak has provoked social stigma and discriminatory behaviours against people who are perceived to have been in contact with the virus.

KZN Health MEC Ms Nomagugu Simelane- Zulu has been speaking at length about this issue on a number of platforms even during the tabling of the Departmental Budget policy statement for the 2020/2021 financial year. She has been calling on communities to desist from the culture of stigmatizing

people who have been infected with COVID-19. "We appeal to our fellow compatriots not to discriminate against those who test positive, but instead show them the love and support that they need. This virus can infect anyone at any time, and we must treat those who test positive as we would like to be treated if we were in their position – as we might be. We are also concerned by the actions of those who do not want to get tested due to 'fear' Not knowing your status poses a threat of infecting others, and spreading the virus even further. We call upon people to ensure they get tested "said MEC Simelane-Zulu.

Coronavirus is just a disease like many others which can be managed by clinicians at an appropriate level of care. The province has a record of successful recoveries and those are our beloved brothers and sisters whom we love so dearly. There is indeed absolutely no need for stigma in the battle against COVID-19; we simply must unite for a common purpose of conquering the virus.



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DEBUNKING STIGMA AND COVID-19, A CLINICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE



Dr Alicia Aron
Senior Manager : Medical Services
Addington Hospital

As COVID-19 ravages across countries around the globe, the pandemic becomes the topic of conversation, the subject of research and the phrase of the day. No one is spared as both poor and affluent communities have been affected; 1st and 3rd world countries have equally experienced the devastating effects of the pandemic.

To date, much attention has been given to the etiology, spread, risk factors and physical symptoms associated with the disease, yet still we have barely scratched the surface and there is a great deal more to be learnt regarding the management of patients infected with COVID-19.

As we race to be involved in research to improve outcomes and to find a cure, we must not lose sight of the fact that patients need to be managed holistically and it is, therefore, crucial that we should also be focusing on the psycho-social consequences of COVID-19 on infected patients and their families.

Understandably, there is still a considerable amount of anxiety and uncertainty associated with COVID-19. It is natural that with the lack of understanding of this relatively new disease, comes fear and apprehension.

Studies have shown that more severe presentations of the disease and an increased mortality rate has been noted in high risk groups such as the elderly and those with co-morbid health conditions such as diabetes. However, the positive aspect is that, from what we have observed thus far, the majority of people infected with COVID-19 will recover. They emerge from the infection with little or no adverse effects and they are able to resume their normal activities and conduct their lives in the same way prior to having the virus.

People diagnosed with COVID-19 are at their most vulnerable, both physically and emotionally. They have a myriad of concerns and fears, including wondering whether they will recover, whether there will be long term complications, whether they will infect loved ones, whether their source of income will be affected, whether they will be able to provide for their families and the list of concerns goes on and on. In addition to all these trepidations, they are faced with stigmatization from members of the community who may discriminate them because of their positive diagnosis.

As a result, infected individuals may then adopt behaviours that may be detrimental to their health such as resisting screening and testing. They may even delay seeking medical assistance fearing that if they attend a healthcare facility, people may realise that they are infected and treat them with prejudice. Stigma is a very real problem that has

been noted in South Africa and, sadly, even noted amongst members of the health care fraternity. One of the key factors in addressing stigmatization is health education and information. The education can be targeted to communities to improve their knowledge and understanding of COVID-19, thereby affecting a change in their attitude and behaviour. We should not view individuals as a disease or illness because human beings are extremely complex and cannot be defined by a collection of signs and symptoms that they exhibit at a particular point in time. The message should be strong and clear - We cannot combat COVID-19 by ostracizing those that are infected!

So where does it all start ?

The road to change starts with each one of us. We need to empower ourselves with knowledge and understanding and then impart this information and awareness to those around us - our families, our colleagues and our communities. Become the catalyst that sparks transformation within your environment. Strive to inspire and motivate those around you, not only to overcome stigma but to reduce and combat discrimination before the consequences become detrimental.

Let us always be cognizant that we become stronger when we stand united, we progress when we educate the masses, we flourish when we support the impoverished and tend the sick and we thrive when we build our communities together. We can safely achieve all this, while minimizing any danger to ourselves, as long as we observe the principles of physical distancing, wear appropriate protective gear eg. masks and emphasize hand hygiene practices.

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TRIAL BRINGS HOPE FOR A LIFESAVING VACCINE

All around the world, researchers have been hard at work, seeking an answer to the COVID-19 pandemic. A clinical trial from Oxford University, UK, shows how a low-dose steroid treatment, dexamethasone, has produced a reduction of death rates in COVID-19 patients by a third.



PROFESSOR SALIM ABDOOL KARIM
CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dexamethasone is a steroid that has been used since the 1960s to reduce inflammation in a range of conditions, including inflammatory disorders and certain cancers.

The Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize was pleased with the news and said that this is a known drug and there is a pharmaceutical company that is manufacturing this drug in South Africa and can therefore be readily available. Chairperson of the Ministerial Advisory Committee, Professor Salim Abdool Karim said, "This is the first major breakthrough that we've had, a small proportion of patients who have COVID-19 have a very high death rate.

Any treatment that is lifesaving will have a substantial impact, one third reduction in those who are most severely ill on ventilators is an important contribution and an important breakthrough."

He further stated that the Ministerial Advisory Committee has given preliminary advise to the Department of Health on the usage of the drug while awaiting full data to be made available for thorough analysis .

As things stand, a recommendation has been made for Doctors to consider using it on patients who are on ventilators.

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KZN BUILDS CAPACITY AS COVID-19 CASES SURGE



COVID-19 FIELD HOSPITALS

KZN has created 7111 beds through extensive renovations and repurposing its own hospitals as well as establishment of field hospitals.

Two field hospitals have been constructed to prepare for the surge of cases in the province and those are

- Royal Show Grounds Field Hospital
- Durban Exhibition Centre Field Hospital

The Royal Show Grounds Field Hospital has 254 isolation beds, which will service UMgungundlovu, Harry Gwala, and UThukela districts. In addition to this the KZN Department of Health has also entered into agreements with a few hotels, B&Bs and resorts, which will make available more than 4000 beds as and when needed.

RECONFIGURED HEALTH FACILITIES

The list of other facilities that have been re-purposed includes

- Clairwood Hospital
- Wentworth Hospital,
- Richmond Hospital
- Dundee Hospital and



- Niemeyer Hospital as well as a few other hospitals in every district.

SUPPORT STAFF

The province also devised a plan to boost the capacity of human resources in all the facilities where bed capacity has been increased.

A recruitment process is currently underway for 8893 personnel who will be employed in the following categories:

- Professional nurses - **4804**
- Staff nurses - **3064**
- Speciality nurses - **151**
- Ward Clerks - **284**
- General Orderlies - **590**

From this cohort of employees, about 1030 enrolled nurses are going to be

translated into professional nurses.

SUPPORT FROM CUBA

KZN has received twenty seven (27) Health Professionals from the 210 Cuban medical professionals who are here in South Africa to assist with the fight against COVID-19. They have been orientated and deployed to Health Districts.

This number includes the following categories:

- 3 x Epidemiological Technologists
- 4 x Health Technologists
- 1 x Information Management Biostatisticians
- 19 x Family Physicians (Medical officers): .

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MIDLANDS COVID-19 FIELD HOSPITAL IS NOW OPEN



KwaZulu-Natal Premier Sihle Zikalala has opened and handed over a new COVID-19 field hospital, situated in Pietermaritzburg, to the provincial health department.



The field hospital opening at the Royal Show grounds was attended by KZN Health MEC Nomagugu Simelane-Zulu and other senior government

officials as well as labour union representatives.

Built in just one month, the site is the latest in a growing list of health facilities in the province that have been designed to

isolate and treat patients who have been confirmed to be COVID -19 - positive. Its 254 isolation beds will service Umgungundlovu, Harry Gwala and UThukela District. It is a fully equipped facility that offers its

own resuscitation baby and COVID-19 resistant additions such as antimicrobial and sporicidal disposable curtains. The facility has begun preparations for admissions this week

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100 000 MASKS FOR KZN HEALTH



KwaZulu-Natal Premier Mr Sihle Zikalala expressed his appreciation to global packaging and paper group Mondi, following its donation of 100,000 FFP3/ N95 medical grade masks, which will protect frontline healthcare workers in KwaZulu Natal from #Covid19.

The handing over of the masks took place at the firm's offices in Merebank, south of Durban, and was also attended by KZN Health MEC Ms Nomagugu Simelane-Zulu, and co-chair of the KwaZulu Natal Growth Coalition Mr Moses Tembe, among other high-ranking officials.

These higher grade medical masks, which are much sought after, have been donated to The Solidarity Fund for delivery to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health. This donation is at a cost of just under R10 million and the result of a truly collaborative effort across the global

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BE A HEALTH CHAMPION, DARING MEN TO ACT NOW

HEALTH CHAT SPOKE TO **DR SANDILE TSHABALALA**, THE HEAD OF HEALTH IN KZN, TO PICK HIS BRAIN ON MEN'S HEALTH MONTH.

What are some of the biggest issues facing men today?

I think one of the biggest issues is their attitude generally. Men will be sick but not seek help until it's very late. It's a trend that starts from a young age and worsens at a later stage. One of the challenges that older men face is prostate

cancer. Usually, when diagnosed early, men can live a long life. Two of the most renowned men in this country, Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, had it, the latter still being alive despite it. If we are preventive in our approach, we stand a better chance of living than someone who will only visit a facility when they are very sick. We're saying to

all men, go check yourselves at an early stage.

Government will check you for free at our clinics; check your blood pressure, check your sugar levels, check on your prostate and other illnesses such as TB, HIV and lately we've been screening for COVID-19 as well. For us to have a good striving economy without depending on other countries... we

can't do that if our people aren't healthy.

Why do you think men tend to visit health facilities less than women?

Among men, when you are sick and complain, you are seen as a "sissy". Look at the old adage, "Men don't cry". The reality is that we do cry.



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
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HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

Sunday, 21 June 2020

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YOUR BLOOD COULD SAVE LIVES



Sunday 14 June 2020 saw the world in its 16th year of the celebration of World Blood Donor Day. This day serves to raise awareness around the ever-growing need for safe blood and blood products.

It is also to honour those donors who voluntarily donate their blood to save the lives of millions every year. Blood transfusions and blood products can assist in increasing patients longevity and quality of life when they are faced with life-threatening diseases, are needing to go through surgery, those who have blood disorders or need transplants. The need for safe blood is a forever growing need as there has not been a substitute that has been invented yet that will be able

to replace blood and its vital functions to the body. The South African National Blood Service (SANBS) aims to collect 3 000 units of blood every day, and it is said that every unit of blood can save a minimum of three lives, and so having regular blood donors ensures that such organisations can meet their demand and save more lives. The need for blood is such a necessity, which is why the SANBS is an essential service and is still operating during this Covid-19 pandemic, ensuring that their donating stations are regularly cleaned and

disinfected. Less than 1% of South Africans are active blood donors, and a large number are eligible to donate but choose not to, some because of unjustified fears and myths. If you are one of those, here are some of your fears and myths on blood donation that might put you at ease:

Myth: "Donating blood is painful"

Fact: While you may experience a bit of pain and discomfort when the needle is inserted into your arm, you

should not feel any pain while the blood is being drawn out or after you donate.

Myth: "I may come into contact with HIV or other diseases if I donate blood"

Fact: All needles and materials used are sterile and are only used once. Once the needles and lancets are used, they are safely disposed of.

Myth: "I'm scared they will take too much of my blood"

Fact: By the law, you can only donate about 480 ml of blood at a time, which is smaller than a carton of milk.

If you want more information on how and where you can donate blood visit www.sanbs.org.za



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PRESIDENT RAMAPHOSA COMMITTS TO STRENGTHEN EFFORTS TO FIGHT GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN THE COUNTRY

On Wednesday night President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the nation on Government's plans to tackle violence against women following the nation's outrage at the brutal murder of Tshegofatso Pule.

"As a man, as a husband and as a father, I am appalled at what is no less than a war being waged against the women and children of our country.

At a time when the pandemic has left us all feeling vulnerable and uncertain, violence is being unleashed on women and children with a brutality that defies comprehension. These rapists and killers walk among us. They are in our communities.

They are our fathers, our brothers, our sons and our friends; violent men with utterly no regard for the sanctity of human life. We will speak for Tshegofatso Pule, Naledi Phangindawo, Nompumelelo Tshaka, Nomfazi Gabada, Nwabisa Mgwandela, Altecia Kortjie

and Lindelwa Peni, all young women who were killed by men.

We will speak for the 89-year-old grandmother who was killed in an old age home in Queenstown, the 79-year-old grandmother who was killed in Brakpan and the elderly woman who was raped in KwaSwayimane in KwaZulu-Natal.

We will speak for the innocent souls of Tshegofatso Pule's unborn daughter who had already been given a name, six-year-old Rayneceia Kotjie and the six-year-old child found dead in the veld in KwaZulu-Natal.

They are not just statistics. They have names and they



had families and friends. I want to commend the South African Police Service for their excellent work in arresting almost all of the alleged perpetrators. As these suspects make bail applications this week, I have the utmost confidence that our courts will send the strongest of signals that such violence has no place in society.

During the lockdown period we have ensured that survivors of gender-based violence have access to support and services, including the GBV hotline, shelters and centres providing support to victims of sexual violence.

I want to assure the women and children of South Africa that our criminal justice system will remain focused on gender-based violence cases and that we can expect more arrests and more prosecutions against perpetrators to follow. By looking away, by discouraging victims from laying charges, by shaming women for their lifestyle choices or their style of dress, we become complicit in these crimes.

I once again call on every single South African listening this evening to consider the consequence of their silence."

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THE IMPORTANCE OF OBSERVING WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

Elderly abuse is an important public health issue, and it can be defined as “a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person”.



The 15th of June is observed as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day every year. It aims to raise awareness around the various issues and forms of abuse that face the elderly around the world. These forms of abuse can range from being physical, psychological, sexual, emotional and financial abuse to neglect, exploitation and how these infringe on their basic human rights, health as well as general well-being.

The elderly are one of South Africa's and the world's most vulnerable groups and in situations where they are abused, they are often left with the inability to defend themselves or ask for help. Abuse of the elderly is not a prominently spoken about

issue, yet it is faced worldwide, hence such days are so important to help people understand the challenges they face and what we can do in order not to contribute to the problem.

The World Health Organization (WHO) stated in 2018, that around 1 of 6 people aged 60 and over have experienced a form of abuse within a community setting and that by the year 2050, the global population of people aged 60 and over will be more than double, going from 900 million in 2015 to 2 billion in 2050.

A call is being made to all South African citizens to be more helpful, compassionate and loving towards our elderly citizens.

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KZN HEALTH IN PICTURES



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CORONA VIRUS
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