#### Private Practice Review presents the reader with a summary of the most relevant breaking news in the local and global healthcare industry, as obtained from media sources, including the public broadcaster, independent television broadcasters, independent news agencies, newspapers, radio and news sites. HealthMan strives to quote the Original Source. HealthMan compiles this information to provide the reader with a brief overview of the most recent events and developments as they are reported in the media. The views and opinions expressed in Private Practice Review are those of the authors of the media sources and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of HealthMan, its directors, employees and associates. In this Newsletter

Healthnews Highlights (1) July - December 2022 Focus on Covid-19 and the pandemic's global impact

Food for Thought Advertorial Global impact General impact Financial impact Special Notes

Healthnews Highlights (2) July to December 2022: Highlights regarding NHI, Financial, Pharmaceutical, General and Medical Scheme matters **COVID-19: FOOD FOR THOUGHT** 

In the next issue:

The pandemic has a

# sting in the tail - Ryan Noach

## "I am deeply concerned about this landscape, supported by what I am seeing in our Discovery Health data," wrote Discovery CEO, Bryan Noach in Business Day (21 October 2022) referring to the

Pharmaceutical impact

second-order effects that the pandemic still has on the world around us. "For the employed, the change to work modes - hybrid, or at-home - and reorganisation of team dynamics present unique stressors that are driving burnout and mental illness in ways we do not yet fully understand. "For people who have recovered from Covid-19, Long Covid symptoms bring additional stress, with widespread complaints of cognitive slowing and symptoms of mental illness."

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How Covid sped up SA's medicine approval process

"The Covid pandemic shook things up - and for the better in the case of getting SAHPRA-approved medicines and other health products such as diagnostic tests onto the market,"

reported Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism (8 Nov 2022).

between four and 11 months - on average five times faster than before - without compromising assessment standards. "Priority has also been given to approvals of products such as HIV prevention medicines, antiretrovirals for HIV, TB and cancer in addition to Covid treatments and vaccines. "The pandemic was a do-or-die moment at SAHPRA."

"Before Covid, it could take SAHPRA three to four years to approve a new product because the regulator was steadily working through a huge backlog of applications. During the pandemic, though, the review process of Covid vaccines was cut down to

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SA's campaign 'missed the mark' On 15 September **Spotlight** reported that government plans to destroy 8.5-m doses of the Pfizer Covid-19

vaccine by the end of October. The situation also raised questions about the fate of 10.1-m stockpiled doses of the Johnson & Johnson

Prof Francois Venter, the Divisional Director of Wits University's health platform, Ezintsha, said the destroying of the vaccines is a shocking indictment of a vaccination programme

vaccine that had expired between June and September

that has been badly run from inception. "From the start, there was no proper budget for advertising the vaccination services, there was no real strategy around what the key messaging was going to be, and the Department of Health just expected people to arrive at a local facility

and get vaccinated," said Venter. To read more, click on the button below Read More

everyone is safe' The pandemic is not behaving in the usual waves anymore. In SA Covid-19 cases

are going through small outbreaks and continually spreading at a low level, said Prof Salim Abdool Karim, epidemiologist and former head of the Covid-19 Ministerial Advisory Committee, at the release of a new global study.

The study, published in the *Journal Nature*, reports that specific efforts and resources are still required to save lives.

**COVID-19: GLOBAL IMPACT** 

'No-one is safe until

- TimesLive (7 October 2022)

as a 'spillover event'." - **MedicalBrief** (3 Nov 2022)

**Corruption scandal** 

hits R5-bn and is still

the coronavirus, including charges of impropriety in giving tenders.

having been investigated".

Covid most likely

'leaked from a lab'

detail an ongoing crisis at the lab with which the country's President, Xi Jinping, may have been dealing personally. Reid's evidence – based on reports from Chinese Communist Party officials based at the Wuhan Institute - forms part of a 500-plus page report put together by the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labour and Pensions.

"Coded messages hidden within reports from the Chinese lab at the centre of Covid origin

theories add to a growing body of evidence that the virus leaked, causing the global pandemic, disputing the official theory from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and some senior scientists that the virus jumped from animals into humans in what is known

"Toy Reid, an expert in 'official speak' used by Chinese elites, believes updates from

the Wuhan Institute of Virology sent weeks before the first official case of Covid in China

growing South Africa's pandemic corruption scandal continues to grow, with R5-bn of the R10.38-bn spent in relief efforts now under investigation, reported *MedicalBrief* (27 August 2022).

Earlier this year, Pres Cyril Ramaphosa ordered the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) to look into allegations of corruption around the government's spending in the battle against

According to SIU head advocate Andy Mothibi some service providers received payments even before they did any work.

"To put the SIU investigations into perspective: their overall value at R5,083,478,584 is

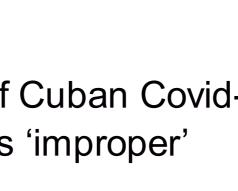
SIU investigation 'barely scratched the surface'

came under the microscope.

"Despite procurement scandals involving prominent political figures such as former Health

Minister Zweli Mkhize and President Cyril Ramaphosa's former spokesperson, Khusela Diko, less than 10% of the R152.5-bn spent between April 2020 and September 2021

#### at public sector sites, while private sector providers sought reimbursement from the department and medical schemes. According to Auditor-General Tsakani Maluleke sufficient audit evidence could not be obtained for R2.079-bn in accrued revenue the department had attributed to **Covid-19 vaccines for 2021/2022.** "The department is 'extremely disappointed' with the Auditor-General's conclusion, said Deputy Director-General for National Health Insurance Nicholas Crisp, who heads the



improper conduct and maladministration." - **Times Live** (1 October 2022) "Public Protector Kholeka Gcaleka said the drug procured was not registered to treat Covid-19 in SA and the DOD senior officials proceeded to bring it into the country before applying to the SA Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) for registration.

Meanwhile DA MP Sarel Marais alleged the DOD had already paid R35-m for 130 000 doses of the drug and was to pay an additional R182-m for a consignment which had

already been delivered.

different information."

"The Office of the Public Protector has found the Department of Defence's (DOD) procurement of an unregistered Covid-19 drug from Cuba constituted

Pharmacies left 'out of pocket' due to NDoH's refusal to cover costs

and there is no mechanism to pay for the administration of a seventh. **COVID-10: PHARMACEUTICAL IMPACT** 

Covid-19 vaccines

produce the needed vaccine doses domestically."

"Most Covid-19 vaccine producers in Western countries have refused to share the technology and know-how that would have enabled developing countries to

US alone. estimates for 2022. Supreme Court of Appeal reverses controversial ivermectin ruling On 21 November the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) set aside a controversial

mean for financial planning? - By Mzwandile Mtshali, Executive of PPS Advisory

What does the metaverse

**ADVERTORIAL** 

to experience the landscape in 3D.

two medical record databases."

**COVID-19: GENERAL IMPACT** 

**Effects of Long Covid can** 

last more than a year

**SPECIAL NOTES** Medical rooms to let in Toikai, Cape Town For more info, contact: Steve: 072 477 0547

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publications. There is furthermore no implied endorsement of any of the products, goods or services mentioned in

our publications.

Karim said in the midst of all the misinformation, vaccines remain our primary tool against this pandemic: "In SA we have a long way to go because only about 50% of adults are vaccinated. Disinformation has become quite rabid in our society and people have lost touch with what the scientific evidence and truth is. People don't understand the fundamental reality of Covid is that 'no-one is safe until everyone is safe'."



just over half the R10.38-bn Covid-19 expenditure, according to the National Treasury.

In January Business Day reported that the SIU may have identified about R8-bn of irregular spending linked to the government's response to the Covid-19 outbreak and recovered about R34-m, "but that barely scratched the surface, with most contracts not

First qualified audit in a decade for Health Department

Business Day reported on 11 October that an apparent disagreement over the National Department of Health's (NDoH) financial records for the Covid-19 vaccination programme has led it to receive a qualified audit from the Auditor-General for the 2021/2022 fiscal year.

The NDoH claimed payments from medical schemes for members who had received jabs

### vaccination programme. The reconciliation of payments will take several more months to finalise, Crisp said, expressing confidence that the numbers will tally at the end of the process," said Maluleke. Procurement of Cuban Covid-19 drug was 'improper'

The National Department of Health (NDoH)'s refusal to cover pharmacies' cost for 'stretching' the Covid-19 Pfizer vaccines has left many of them 'out of pocket', reported Business Day (14 September 2022). According to Jackie Maiman, CEO of the Independent Community Pharmacy Association,

some pharmacies extracted an extra seventh dose from vials of Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine

to meet demand at the time when vaccines were scarce. This was in line with guidance

from the US Food and Drug Administration. However, the NDoH said the vaccination programme was designed around extracting six doses only from Pfizer's vaccine vials,

Covid vaccine drive is running out of steam Daily Covid vaccinations in SA have plateaued since July, according to *Ground Up* (15 Nov 2022). "At the peak of the vaccination drive, up to 240 000 vaccine doses were being administered daily. This has dropped to just over 5 000 a day. Less than half of these are

first doses, and a third are booster shots. Half the adult population is currently vaccinated. This includes 73% of adults 60 years or older who have been fully

vaccinated. The government's dedicated coronavirus website has a list of 'active

vaccination sites', many of which are no longer active, and the 'Find My Jab' page has

 About 2 000 new cases are reported each week, but according to the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, only 16% of cases are being detected.

- the ethical issues In an article in *Daily Maverick* (24 October 2022) **Prof Alexis Habiyare mye** (senior researcher, SA Research Chair in Industrial Development at the University of Johannesburg) writes: "The high sales prices of life-saving pharmaceuticals during life-threatening

situations - such as the sale of Covid-19 vaccines at \$37 per dose to some developing countries - raises ethical concerns.".

The Moderna Covid-19 vaccine, had a total revenue of \$18-bn for the year 2021; the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine generated \$37-bn in the same period. At the height of the pandemic, 75% of all vaccines produced had been appropriated by high and upper middle-income countries, with no more than 0.5% going to low-income countries.

COVID - 19 COVID - 19 Drug makers won't scale Pfizer's Paxlovid reduces back on Covid-19 orders Long Covid risk Government has failed to convince drug "Pfizer's blockbuster Paxlovid antiviral that manufacturers Pfizer and Johnson & lowers rates of illness and death in people Johnson to scale back orders it had to sign infected with the coronavirus also cuts the risk of some symptoms of disabling Long with them, reported **Business Day** (29 September 2022). Covid," reported *Bloomberg* (7 November According to Deputy Director-General for 2022). "A study has found that taking the oral NHI, Nicholas Chrisp - who oversees the

medication within five days of testing

positive for a SARS-CoV-2 infection was linked to a 26% lower risk of lingering post-

viral complications. The research, based

Department of Veterans Affairs, suggests

that wider use of the treatment won't just stave off critical disease during the acute

phase of infection, but will limit patients'

Long Covid is estimated to afflict

almost 150-m people worldwide and

predicted to cost \$3.7 trillion in the

likelihood of longer-term problems."

on electronic health records at the US

vaccine rollout - "SA procured vaccines in a

hostile and competitive global market, and

now lives with the consequences of those very one-sided contracts". Crisp said that

12-m shots had been ordered from

international vaccine-financing vehicle

in 2021. Government has been able to

By 28 September, 20.4-m adults had

Covax.

negotiate a reduction in its obligations to

received at least one dose, or just more

than half of the demographic, which stood

at 40.4-m according to Stats SA's midyear

Covax, 30-m from Pfizer, and 31-m from J&J

supervisory order, granted in April 2021, compelling the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) to report back to court every three months on access to ivermectin for use in the treatment of Covid-19 patients. "The issue has its genesis in four applications, one by the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) in 2021 against SAHPRA seeking access to ivermectin for the treatment of Covid-19," reported *News24* (21 Nov 2022). "At that time, SAHPRA, which was wary of its use, saying there was no reliable research to prove its efficacy, had already put in place its 'controlled compassionate use' programme in response to reports of illicit *ivermectin*-containing products entering the South African market. The programme was stopped in May this year." • In terms of that programme, permission was granted to five importers of unregistered oral solid dosage forms of ivermectin. Health facilities were permitted to hold bulk stock, but individual applications were still required.

Covid-19 home tests now available in SA

Cheap at-home antigen tests are now available in SA - more than two years after the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) first approved them for use by healthcare professionals only, reported Business Insider (24 November 2022). "SAHPRA has awarded a license to re-sell the tests for at-home use to Johannesburg based company TipTop Trade, the first in the country to obtain approval for a Covid-19 antibody test in July 2020.

Creating a financial plan was complicated enough before the arrival of cryptocurrencies, non-fungible tokens (NFTs) and blockchain technology. But these, and other technologies, are here to stay. One such technological development that could have a profound impact on many

industries – including financial services – is the large-scale adoption of working and socialising in virtual realities - collectively known as the metaverse. In the metaverse, your virtual reality (VR) headset takes you inside those digital playgrounds, allowing you

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Second infection may cause long-term damage

"The risk of long-term damage or prolonged symptoms increased with the second Covid-19 infection. What is not clear, is whether the damage came from fairly severe repeat infections or if it has anything to do with 'Long Covid'," reported *Bloomberg News* (14 July 2022). This is according to the latest US research – where the records from more than 5-m people were used to compare the fates of the never-infected with more than 250 000 who sought care for one Covid-19 infection, and about 38 000 who sought care for two or more. In another study, published in **Science**, researchers suggested that immunity from previous versions of the virus might actually dampen the body's ability to develop immunity to Omicron, the variant that's been dominant, in different forms, since the winter.

According to the latest study by researchers at the University of Washington, 6.2% of

people who had Covid-19 in the pandemic's first two years experienced symptoms three months later. Of those patients, 15% were still afflicted after a year. – **Bloomberg News** 

Medical rooms to let in Tokai, Southern Suburbs, Cape Town. The premises have excellent visibility in an upmarket area opposite a large shopping centre. It also offers ample parking, security, uncapped Wi-fi and is wheelchair friendly.

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