



## PRIVATE PRACTICE REVIEW

## COVID-19 testing picks up

On May 16, the total COVID-19 cases in the country stood on 13 524 and 247 deaths have been confirmed. According to latest data (15 May) 6 083 patients have recovered from the virus.

## NOTICE

*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.

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## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

## Making sense of a pandemic

"Is the lockdown strategy the correct one and how best should it be lifted; how dangerous is the virus and to whom; what will the impact of all this be on the economy; and what will a post-COVID-19 future look like?" wrote **Adrian Gore**, founder and CEO of Discovery Group, in *Financial Mail* (7 May 2020).



"In the absence of a vaccine or antiviral drug, a terrible trade-off must be made between public health and the economy - and the only tool is a lockdown with two variables: intensity and duration.

"Between 45% and 75% of small businesses may not survive a lockdown of between one and three months, according to STATS SA. At this rate, their 'mortality rate' will be higher than those at risk from a health perspective," wrote Gore.

To read more, click on **ADRIAN GORE**

Adrian Gore

## 'Flatten the Curve'

"We have not 'flattened the curve' with the lockdown, and our current trajectory of new infections, uncontained by the lockdown, is very worrying," writes **Alex van den Heever**, in *Fin24* (10 May 2020).

To read more, click on **Alex vd Heever** below

Alex vd Heever

## NEWS ON GOVERNMENT



## DA asks provinces for more detailed testing results

The Democratic Alliance is putting pressure on provincial health departments to release more details about their COVID-19 testing and confirmed cases, saying credible and consistent data is vital for guiding interventions," reported *Business Day* (5 May 2020). The DA's health spokesperson, Siwele Gwarube, said that the party planned to submit Promotion of Access to Information Act (Paia) applications to provincial health departments in a bid to compel them to release detailed COVID-19 statistics. At present, only Gauteng and the Western Cape are releasing daily figures for their testing numbers, confirmed cases and fatalities.

Meanwhile the Eastern Cape has failed to disclose its figures and has effectively hidden its low testing rate from public scrutiny, said Gwarube. The DoH requested epidemiological data from provinces on a regular basis, but was not determining what they made public.

## NHLS buckles under test demand

Although the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS), has set a national target of 36 000 COVID-19 tests a day by the end of April, patients have to wait as long as seven days for the results of test samples sent to the NHLS.



On May 12, Health Minister Zweli Mkhize, announced that Government has increased COVID-19 screening as well as testing nationally in public laboratories, with public sector tests now representing 51% or 189 688 of all tests done countrywide. Up until then, delays have prevented the departments of health in the provinces from managing confirmed cases, and to trace, screen and test their contacts.

## SA urged to increase COVID-19 testing

*City Press* (10 May) reported that public health specialists had suggested that now may be the time to move from surveillance of COVID-19 and active case-finding to focusing on hotspot areas. Shabir Madhi, a professor of vaccinology at Wits University, said the country was still at an early stage of the pandemic, even though the case numbers seemed "rightening". He predicted that cases may be peaking, probably at up to 6 000 new cases per day come July and August. Madhi said that between 15 000 and 20 000 people should be tested daily. He said SA is not testing at scale and it is taking five to 10 days for the results to get back from the National Health Laboratory Service.

## SPECIAL NEWS

## Critical to protect our doctors and nurses during COVID-19

ETHIQAL

CONSTANTIA



As the Coronavirus infection curve climbs to over twice the minimum daily numbers of infections required to lift the lockdown, healthcare workers are realising just how real the threat is to them.

They are witnessing colleagues (currently just a handful), getting infected, and anxiously asserting their rights to adequate protection. This in the midst of a global personal protection equipment (PPE) procurement war. SA has well below the ideal amount of PPE required for daily use (most of it not re-usable, and currently being used over five shifts).

Click here to read more.

Ethiqal

## COVID-19 fallout and uncertainties hammering private practices

Faced with dwindling patient numbers, limitations on hospital admissions and surgical procedures, a decreasing cash



flow to meet financial obligations and the real fear of being infected, South Africa's specialists are fearing for the future of their practices and their patients' ability to access healthcare outside of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the start of the lockdown, patient visits to clinical practices have declined by up to 80% while some specialists like ophthalmologists, ENTs and dentists effectively shut down due to the high risk of infection in these specialties.

Uncertainties are further fuelled by Government's lack of communication on the utilisation of the private sector when the surge hits the country; how private doctors will be paid should they be required to treat state COVID-19 patients; and the availability of additional funds to cover soaring expenses on PPEs and closing down practices when doctors and staff have been in contact with infected patients.

Read more

## FINANCIAL NEWS



## Life Healthcare scraps interim dividend

On May 12, *Business Day* reported that private hospital group Life Healthcare scrapped its interim

dividend payment to shareholders - the first time it has done so since listing on the JSE in 2010. The company estimated COVID-19 knocked R264-m off its revenue and R166-m off its normalised earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (ebitda). According to Asief Mohamed, chief investment officer at Aeon Investment Management, the company is building cash reserves and credit lines to survive the pandemic.

## PHARMACEUTICAL NEWS

## South Africa starts coronavirus trial of TB Vaccine

On May 4, *EWN* reported that trials were started at Tygerberg Hospital in Cape Town. Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) booster shots were administered to



250 health care workers, while another 250 received a dummy formula, or placebo. The vaccine is one of the world's oldest and most trusted immunisations.

Prof Andreas Diacon and his research team want to determine whether BCG could have an effect on coronavirus by reducing the risk of infection or easing symptoms.

"If you can reduce the symptoms just a little, you will probably get people to survive COVID-19 better or not even have to go to hospital or not even become ill," said Diacon.

## GENERAL NEWS



## In Memoriam:

## Prof Bernard Janse van Rensburg passed away on Thursday, 23rd of April 2020, following a massive heart attack a few days earlier.

"To those of us who knew him well, and those who admired him from afar, this is no doubt a huge shock and leaves us numbed by the reality of his passing." - Board of Directors of SASOP, in its eulogy. Prof Van Rensburg was the

Immediate Past-President of the South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP) and was instrumental in the stance SASOP took against the Gauteng Marathon Project that led to the Life Esidimeni tragedy. He was the Secretary of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry and an honorary member of the WPA. He was also the chair of the SAMA Academic Doctors Association (ADASA).

## Field hospital beds for COVID-19 patients

On Sunday, May 3, *Carte Blanche* (M-Net) broadcasted visuals of one of the latest local innovations, sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A group of local innovators came up with an ingenious design that makes affordable, quick-to-assemble and easily sanitised beds available to the government.



To watch the video, visit the Carte Blanche website on <https://mnet.dstv.com/show/carte-blanche>

Carte Blanche



## Obesity adds to risk of severe COVID-19

A study of 17 000 COVID-19 hospital admissions by the UK's University of Liverpool reported death rates were 37% higher among obese patients.

World Obesity Federation CEO, Johanna Ralston, said obesity could worsen due to restricted movement and high food insecurity. She said the stigma and shame associated with obesity make lockdown even more challenging.

Dr Gert du Toit, a surgeon at Netcare St Augustine's Hospital's Durban Metabolic Surgery Centre, said South Africans were eating more processed food during lockdown, making obesity one of its unintended consequences. Rising obesity could create an "additional burden on the healthcare system and, in a sense, exacerbate the pandemic," Du Toit said.

About 15% of people in the UK, Europe's COVID-19 epicentre, had gained weight during lockdown, but in SA this was likely to be mitigated by the ban on sales of alcohol, a major contributor to weight gain.



## SA's only Nobel Prize winning scientist calls lockdowns 'a huge mistake'

SA born Nobel Prize winning scientist, 73-year-old Stanford University professor Michael Levitt, described SA's lockdown policies as "a huge mistake". He was interviewed (9 May 2020) on *Unheard.com*.

Levitt said if the world had paid closer attention to the way China dealt with the threat of COVID-19, governments elsewhere would have reacted very differently. Instead of closing down the economy, the approach would be:

"If we were to do this all again, we'd insist on face masks, hand disinfecting substances and some form of payment system that does not involve touching (i.e. phones, not credit cards of cash) - and only isolating the elderly."

## This is why soap work so well

So why does soap work so well on the SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus and indeed most viruses? The short story: because the virus is a self-assembled nanoparticle in which the weakest link is the lipid (fatty) bilayer. Soap dissolves the fat membrane and the virus falls apart like a house of cards and dies - or rather, we should say it becomes inactive as viruses aren't really alive.



To read more, click on the link below

SOAP

## Actuaries say Covid-19 deaths reach 88 000

According to a predictive model from the Actuarial Society of SA (ASSA), the death toll from SA's coronavirus outbreak this year could range between 46 000 and 88 000. ASSA has provided the industry with a range of scenarios that predict that the number of cases will peak between August and September, at between 588 000 and 2.3-m people.

## NEWS ON MEDICAL SCHEMES

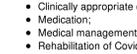
## Medical scheme cover for COVID-19 outlined

On Friday, May 8, the Department of Health published changes to the Medical Schemes Act which outlines cover for COVID-19. The Gazette details the diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19 as a Prescribed Minimum Benefit (PMB) by medical aids.



According to the regulations the following treatments will be covered:

- Screening;
- Clinically appropriate diagnostic tests;
- Medication;
- Medical management including hospitalisation and treatment of complications;
- Rehabilitation of Covid-19.



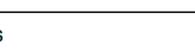
## Discovery to waive OON penalties

Discovery Health announced that it will waive out of network (OON) penalties for all network plans (Coastal,

Delta, Smart and KeyCare) for the duration of the lockdown period. This will be applicable to non-emergency COVID and non COVID related admissions. Emergency admissions already waive OON rules for these admissions, according to a statement by Darren Sweidan, the medical aid's Head: Health Professional Unit.

## Circulars from the CMS

The following Circulars were published by the CMS in April/May 2020.



28 of 2020  
COVID-19 Medical Schemes Industry Guidelines

31 of 2020  
SAICA Accounting Guide

29 of 2020  
Claims information for beneficiaries treated for COVID-19

32 of 2020  
Signatures required relating to the Annual Statutory Return electronic submission for 31 December 2019

30 of 2020  
Confirmation of purchase of the RA Gilbert Pharmacies by Platinum Health

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