Private Hospital groups shift their focus *Fin24* (6 July 2020) reported that, as the infection rate continues to climb and gets

closer to the 200 000 mark, private hospital groups Netcare, Life Healthcare and

Mediclinic have had to shift their focus to dealing with the pandemic while their regular

already had a tough run due to a low-growth economy with insured lives stagnant at

According to Victor Mupunga, a research analyst at Old Mutual Wealth Private Client

competitors, since it only operates in SA. Netcare has 55 hospitals and about 10 000

Mediclinic owns 52 hospitals in Southern Africa and more 8 700 beds. Dr Stefan Smuts, chief clinical officer said the group has decided to postpone its capital investment projects

Securities, **Netcare** will feel the impact of the weakened economy more than its

almost nine million and challenges in their overseas businesses. Shares in Netcare are some 62% lower over the past five years, while Life Healthcare is trading 49% lower.

patients choose to stay away. Before the corona outbreak the listed hospital groups have

beds in the country. Life Healthcare, which has 49 hospitals and 9 136 beds, has also felt the impact of C-19 and has seen its Southern Africa hospital admissions fall by almost 40% from mid-March to the end of April. The group estimates that its earnings had declined by R67-m due to the pandemic.

to allow for better cash flow and is reprioritising.

PHARMACEUTICAL NEWS

Fight over a vaccine will get ugly

Mediclinic has slumped 70% since February 2016.

Dis-Chem Pharmacy Group to fight **PHARMACIES** gouging fine Pharmacists who care Dis-Chem has announced that it intends appealing against the Competition Tribunal's R1.2-m fine for price gouging in the sale of surgical masks. According Dis-Chem CEO, Ivan Saltzman, Dis-Chem was reacting in a responsible manner to significant disruptions to the market and that it increased its retail prices while it was facing significant price increases and shortages from its suppliers.

"More than 100 COVID-19 drug candidates in 12 countries are in development, and 8 are already entering clinical trials. With luck, some of us can get our shots next year. And yet, there's still a danger that humanity will fail in its quest to control COVID-19." - **Bloomberg** (11 July 2020). "Rich nations will try to outbid poor ones in securing supplies of the

vaccine. Ethical problems of triage will also haunt domestic politics."

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Read More

First COVID-19 vaccine trial in Africa

The first trial in Africa to test a vaccine against C-19, will be led by Wits professor Shabir Madhi, a global leader in vaccine development. The vaccine, or a placebo, will be tested on 50 people and then on 1 900 South Africans who are healthy, under the age of 65 and do not have HIV/AIDS. The vaccine was developed at the University of Oxford, where it has already been tested on more than 7 000 people. Two more vaccines against C-19 are expected to

Cipla to provide SA with generic

remdesivir

be tested in 2020 in SA, said Professor Glenda Gray, head

Cipla

of the SA Medical Research Council (SAMRC).

Indian drug manufacturer Cipla announced that it will soon provide SA with its generic version of the coronavirus drug *remdesivir*. An initial batch of 35 000 vials should arrive in the week of July 20. This is the first drug to have been approved by US authorities to treat COVID-19. Cipla plans to sell the drug at \$55 a shot, or \$330 (R5 600) for a five-day course; much cheaper than Gilead's price of \$520 a vial for US patients with private insurance. Remdesivir has been approved for emergency use in some patients in the US, but dexamethasone has since been hailed as a potential breakthrough treatment. Gilead has linked up with generic drug makers based in India and Pakistan, including Cipla and Hetero Labs, to make and supply *remdesivir* in 127 developing countries.

First antibody test gets green light in SA

Dr Andrea Julsing-Keyter, senior manager of SA Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA), announced that a licence to supply the rapid test kit, called Orient Gene Covid-19, had been given to Tip Top Trade (Pty) Ltd and that more applications for licenses to supply the kit had been made. – *Spotlight* (10 July 2020) The Chinese product has been authorised for use in China and has been approved by authorities there for export. Another antibody rapid test manufactured by the same company, Zhejiang Orient Gene Biotech, was used effectively in a large COVID-19 serological survey in Spain. The rapid test would also be cheaper, easier to use and could reach more people from a public health perspective.

TB meds side-effects crisis

According to a study, by the HSRC the inadequate reporting of the side-effects of drug-resistant TB (DR-TB) were one of main reasons for patients defaulting on medication.

Ventilation 'key' for preventing

spreading

More attention needs to be paid to

ventilation in crowded places and public

Medical Research Council president

Glenda Gray, who is also an advisory

not congregate in closed spaces, and

public transport should keep windows

Meanwhile the WHO has

transmission of C-19 meant people should

acknowledged research by 239

scientists in 32 countries concluding that airborne transmission - in which

people are infected by inhaling tiny

droplets containing virus particles

Prof Lungile Pepeta the new

chairperson of CMS Council

On June 25, Health Minister, Zweli Mkhize,

Council

for Medical Schemes

committee member, told MPs that

emerging evidence of airborne

Gastrointestinal reactions, peripheral neuropathy, and hepatitis abnormalities, are the 14 common side-effects associated with drug-resistant TB medication. HSRC's Dr Razia Gaida said while many cases of TB could be cured with six months' antibiotic treatment, DR-TB does not respond to one or more antibiotics and, in some cases, can be difficult to cure. Of the surveyed facilities across SA, only half - 50.6% had submitted treatment adverse events forms to relevant authority and 44.5% were "unsure".

The survey also noted that there was disparity in the reporting forms, with the facilities using up to five different forms to record an adverse reaction, as well as lack of training for nurses and community healthcare workers. Many patients stop taking therapy before

they have completed the six months course, or by not taking the medication correctly.

GENERAL NEWS

Infection rate more extensive

than had been expected

According to a scientific coordinator at Wits

protocol for a new vaccination had to be

participants will have to be excluded from

Patients are injected with COVID-19, which

has been modified to ensure that the virus

cannot be spread. Once the patient

develops the coronavirus, samples are taken from them for analysis to determine

the efficiency of the potential vaccine.

The South African Ox1Cov-19 Vaccine

VIDA Trial is the first in Africa and

certain planned analyses, which could

amended and one out of every five

affect the power of the study.

University's African Leadership in

Vaccinology, Clare Cutland, the COVID-19 transport, according to leading scientists. infection rate is much more extensive than Greater emphasis should be placed on had been expected. Cutland said by June opening windows in schools, buses and 6 (21%) 35 of the 162 patients enrolled for taxis, and more consideration given to a COVID-19 trial tested positive for before holding events such as religious gatherings receiving the vaccine. outdoors, said Wits vaccinologist Shabir Because of how many people were **Madhi**, (member of the Health Minister's infected, but asymptomatic, the trial's advisory committee on Covid-19).

open.

coronavirus transmission in public transport, and testing strategies as well as issues around disinfection tunnels and antibody tests. Health economist Prof Alex van den Heever said the MAC advisories should be made public, unless there was a compelling public interest reason not to do so. Hiding advice to avoid having to properly account for a decision cannot reasonably be justified on public interest grounds, Van den Heever said.

researchers are hoping to have results by that linger in the air - was a threat in November. closed spaces. Scientific advisories on C-19 won't be released Health Minister Zweli Mkhize decided not to release the more than 70 scientific advisories on C-19 he has received from the Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) -Business Day (13 July 2020). Mkhize said health policy had to be approved by the National Health Council (NHC), and input was not restricted to scientific advisers. The advisories cover contested issues such as alcohol restrictions, measures to reduce

NEWS ON MEDICAL SCHEMES

In Memoriam:

Dr Nthabi Rankhethoa

On July 3, Dr Nthabi Rankhethoa passed

Aid and Hosmed Medical Scheme, in what may be a

sector," reported *Mail & Guardian* (26 June 2020).

detail, saying the matter was sub judice."

Organisations Accredited by the

Bestmed Medical Scheme and Grintek

Electronics Medical Aid Society merge

SPECIAL NOTES

Quarterly Statutory Returns

Submisssion for 2020

CMS Website down

Council EXCO

42 of 2020

43 of 2020

44 of 2020

our publications.

serious blow to the much-needed transformation of the

"According to a CMS source, the registrar, Sipho Kabane,

there is no provision for suspension of an amalgamation in the Medical Schemes Act. Kabane refused to comment in

is asking the schemes to agree to an unlawful step, as

Should the merger go ahead the new entity, with nearly

78 000 members, would become the eighth-largest open

medical scheme in SA. It would give black capital a major

foothold in an industry seen as largely untransformed."

appointed Professor Lungile Pepeta as the away. During 2018 and 2019 Dr new Chairperson of the Council for Medical Rankhethoa was the Acting Head of the Schemes (CMS), the regulator of the Department for the Discipline of Otorhinolaryngology at the University of medical schemes industry. KZN. Dr Nthabi Rankhethoa will be sorely This appointment is effective from 18 June missed by her patients, colleagues, 2020 to the end of November 2020. students, friends and family. Row over medical scheme merger The Council of Medical Schemes (CMS) has stepped in to halt the proposed merger of black-owned Sizwe Medical

Discovery Health waiver has come to an end

In a statement by Discovery Health it informs members that it has reviewed the decision to waive out of network rules for network pans. The waiver came to an end effective Monday the 22 June 2020. This means that from the 22 June 2020, any non-emergency admissions out of network for network plans (Coastal, Delta, Smart and KeyCare) will effectively attract an out of network penalty as per normal plan benefit rules. Emergency admissions are not impacted by the reinstatement of the rules.

advisors

46 of 2020

47 of 2020

for the 2020

financial year

General concerns noted during the

Statements (AFS) and Annual

Statutory returns (ASR)

analysis of the 2019 Annual Financial

Annual Statutory Returns development

Circulars from the CMS (\rightarrow) The following Circulars were published by the CMS between June and July 2020. 41 of 2020 45 of 2020 Authorisation of Auditors and IFRS Administrators and Managed Care

PSYCHIATRIST The Lentegeur Psychiatric Hospital in Cape Town has an interesting post for a registered General Specialist Psychiatrist which involves 60% of time spent in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services working with certified C&A Psychiatrists, and 40% of time spent in the Adult Intellectual Disability Services as the Specialist Psychiatrist of that service. There is no obligation of after-hours duties. The post is available from the 1st November 2020 and the **Closing Date for** applications is the 31st July 2020. For further enquiries please contact:

> Dr R Allen via Robin.Allen@westerncape.gov.za or Ms Mary Jacobs at 021 370 1314

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