

COVID-19: NEWSFLASH #76: THURSDAY 15 APRIL 2021

AT LAST----SOME GOOD NEWS!!!

South Africans have been in various stages and forms of Lockdown for 385 days. It is almost impossible to absorb this fact; never in our wildest dreams would we have envisaged such a global phenomenon or nightmare. The drama continues. Will we be hit by another wave? Is the worst over? When will I receive my vaccination? When can we get back to some sort of usual routine in our lives?

CovidCom has been wrestling with these and other issues on a regular basis, and have been closely monitoring the Covid landscape, locally and globally, and reviewing our defences and battle plans.

CovidCom met yesterday. Within MHA we have had no Covid infections since December (residents or staff), and we remain convinced that we can attribute this to careful planning and execution, to our hygiene protocols and practices, to the level of compliance by all staff, and the actions and co-operative attitude of our residents and their families. We are also convinced that God has protected us throughout this nightmare.

Against this background, CovidCom decided at yesterday's meeting that the time has come to make some bold and far-reaching decisions, which we believe will be generally accepted and appreciated by residents across all of our facilities. We summarize the decisions as follows:

Our Lockdown and Locked-in rules:

- As from Monday 19 April 2021 we will open up our CP Bradfield Frail Care, Maranatha Frail Care, Bob Zeiss Bedsitters and Epworth Close to receive visitors, and residents in those facilities will be free to leave, in order to go out for the day or a longer period, to go shopping, to travel, or to enjoy freedom again in any other safe way
- Family or friends wishing to visit a Frail Care resident may do so in a resident's room, or to make use of the lounge or outside spaces and gardens
- Family or friends of residents in the four abovementioned facilities are encouraged to assist with taking a resident to a medical facility or a business premises (eg. a bank), as was the practice pre-Covid
- There will no longer be a need for a resident to self-isolate on returning from a social visit, or from a medical or business appointment. Regarding a resident returning from a stay in hospital, our Nursing Services Manager will consider, on a case-by-case basis, if a period of isolation is warranted, particularly cases where there has been a prolonged stay in a hospital or similar facility
- The gate separating CP Bradfield/Bob Zeiss Bedsitters and Cassia Gardens will re-open (using the code to be provided), so that residents can move freely between those facilities, in order to visit or exercise
- Inevitably there are a few 'rules and regulations' attached to these new arrangements, and these are:
 - All visitors must continue to wear a mask and practice social distancing when in a public space. This would apply equally to folk wishing to walk around the Cassia Gardens open spaces

- A Declaration form will have to be completed by every visitor on arrival for every visit, and have his/her temperature taken. Hand sanitizing material will be provided, and must be used
- A maximum of TWO visitors to a resident at any one time will be permitted (this does not apply to residents in our Villages)

Blood Pressure clinics:

These will resume effective Tuesday 20 April 2021, and will be carried out by Matron Sanet Marx. The same roster format as per pre-Covid will be used, and residents will be advised of this shortly.

Please remember to wear your mask when going to have your BP checked.

The MHA bus shuttle to shopping centres:

This service, for residents in our Villages, Bedsitters and Epworth Close, will be re-introduced effective Monday 26 April 2021 (our driver Mike is currently on leave). More details about this will follow.

Vaccinations:

There is currently so much coverage and hype in the media about the roll-out of vaccination across SA: how long it is going to take to vaccinate the whole population, what vaccines are safe (rare instances of blood clotting are occurring around the world), how and where to put your name on a register, where you must go to be vaccinated, will the elderly be next in line after the healthcare workers, what will it cost, or what can your medical aid do to speed up the process. Progress is being made daily, but there are clearly logistical and political issues at play. While this is going on, tens of millions of South Africans remain at risk, unnecessarily. Of huge concern to us is that the MHA frontline staff, who work in our two Frail Cares, have still not been vaccinated, even though they were registered for this purpose with the Department of Health over two months' ago.

CovidCom is closely monitoring the situation, and maintaining contact with the right agencies, and we will keep you abreast of developments. We are as keen as you are to see the whole MHA family vaccinated as soon as possible.

General:

CovidCom also wish to share the following with residents, staff, and the extended MHA family:

- It is understandable that relaxation of our current Lockdown/Locked-in rules and regulations may generate some resistance. CovidCom made a collective and unanimous decision to open up our facilities once again, and moving forward in this way was based on the best information available locally, nationally and globally. We move forward in faith, but in a measured and responsible way, based on what is happening (or going to happen) elsewhere
- The relaxations now being implemented can change overnight, should any of MHA's facilities encounter a Covid infection, whether it be a staff member or a resident
- With this in mind, we all need to continue to be vigilant, compliant, and to behave in the responsible way we have been doing for over a year
- Please bear in mind that those MHA residents who have been locked in since March 2020 are going to encounter a strange new world out there, when they go to a shopping mall or

bank or coffee shop. They will see sanitizers everywhere, maybe a register to complete, social distancing markers on the floor---and of course they will encounter folk who do not want to shake a hand or receive a hug or kiss, and who will keep at least two metres away, wearing a mask throughout. It will almost be an alien environment, and it is up to staff and family to help residents acclimatize during the process. MHA will also be doing some training and orientation, in this regard.

Malcolm Stewart (who reminds us to remain cautious and careful---but be courageous too!)

CovidCom Chairman (and on behalf of the Board, Management, our staff, and CovidCom)