

COVID-19: NEWSFLASH #81: WEDNESDAY 07 JULY 2021
FIGHTING THE WAR AGAINST COVID: ARE WE ALL DOING ENOUGH?



Remember this type of ‘warning’ sign from around mid-2020? It feels like a lifetime ago! At that time it seemed sufficient to practice the three disciplines listed on posters like this, and preached by anyone and everyone. It worked for a time, but then two things happened: firstly, the Coronavirus mutated into different strains, each one nastier than the first, and then

secondly, as Lockdown dragged on and on and on, ‘pandemic fatigue’ crept in, leading to a deadly cocktail of apathy, disobedience, denial or, worst of all, a mindset of ‘If I get it, I get it’ or ‘I don’t believe in this Covid nonsense anymore’.

General Charles de Gaulle once famously said: “France has lost a battle. But France has not lost the war”. Maybe, in the MHA context, we are heading in that direction? Some of our residents have been infected with Covid after exposure to others in social environments, and all too many residents are mixing in groups. A defence heard frequently, inside and outside of the MHA family, are comments like “It’s okay; I am only getting together with family” or “I know those people; they’re being careful, just like we are” or “I only hug my grandchildren; they’re safe”. PLEASE, dear MHA family members, DON’T fall into these traps. Children come home from playschool or school, carrying the virus, and this gets passed on to parents, grandparents, and others. Even if you have been vaccinated, you can still catch the virus and pass it onto others. This situation is likely to continue for a very long time to come. We have lost some battles, but we will win the war. It is up to all of us to contribute, and our behaviour over the next few months (especially now, in winter) will dictate what casualties will result. Last Saturday AlgoaFM News reported that on Friday there had been 24,000 new infections across RSA (the highest ever), 300 new deaths bringing the death toll to 61,500, and there were 180,000 active cases of Covid. As of yesterday, the death toll had risen to over 62,000, and the 7-day average new daily infection rate was 19,000. In our Metro all the hospitals are full of Covid patients, the ICU’s are full, and theatres are only dealing with emergency cases. The situation is dire. Six months ago all of us probably knew of at least one person who had been tested positive for Covid; today most of us know people, by name, who have died from Covid, or who are on a ventilator, fighting for oxygen and life.

In the heading of this Newsflash we ask the question: Are we all doing enough? The MHA Board, the Management team and CovidCom plead with residents and staff to:

- avoid social contact as much as you can; stay apart now so that we can be together again when it is safe
- continue with the disciplines shown in the poster above---they are still the most effective defence

- if you have decided not to be vaccinated, please reconsider (we acknowledge some have valid reasons)
- leave the safety of your cottage or apartment/room as seldom as possible (it is your only 'safe place')
- visit shops and retail malls as seldom as possible
- hang in there! We have all come so far (as a nation and within MHA), so we cannot give up or give in now.

With the current increase in infections within our Villages, we want to remind residents in our 'independent living' Villages of what has been spelt out in previous communiques, and what should happen if you have flu-like symptoms which might be Covid-related:

1. inform your Manager (by phone; do not go to his/her office or cottage)
2. remain in your cottage; in effect, self-isolate
3. do NOT go to the shops to stock up, and cancel upcoming appointments and commitments
4. monitor your symptoms and health, and seek the assistance of your GP if they get worse
5. in an emergency, press your panic button and wait for the assistance of Atlas and Gardmed.

It is important for us to emphasize here that residents in our Villages should each have a contingency plan of action if you develop Covid-like symptoms. It is NOT the responsibility of MHA to deal with this, on your behalf. MHA has frail care facilities which are occupied (and full) by residents requiring ongoing care and attention because of their frailty, but we do not have hospital-type facilities which can deal with physical emergencies and the provision of ventilators and the like. The Village Managers will continue to offer support and assistance as they have been doing when an emergency occurs (and not just Covid-related), but they are not skilled to provide any form of medical intervention. This is why MHA has contracted with Atlas who have Gardmed as their preferred service provider, to provide that level of 'first responder' intervention and ambulance service.

Regarding the Atlas/Gardmed service, we must inform you that there could be long delays for an ambulance to arrive if your panic button is activated. Ambulances currently wait up to 5 hours at hospitals to have a patient admitted – this is NOT due to bad service from Atlas (they will still attend to a call-out, however they will not enter a cottage if a person is Covid+).

If any Village resident has any questions or queries about what has been dealt with above, please do not hesitate to refer this to your Manager who, if necessary, will elevate the issue to the CEO or Nursing Services Manager.

BREAKING (GOOD!) NEWS:

MHA is now registered as a vaccination site for our own residents and staff. MHA can now administer all vaccines, and our Nursing Services Manager will be going to all the Villages on the date of the second dose. We are no longer dependent on the Department of Health for this. Even if you received your first jab at Clicks or Dischem or at a hospital/clinic, you can now receive the second jab at the Village where you live. If you had your first jab elsewhere, please inform your Manager (at least 7 days before the date shown below) that you wish to receive your second jab at your Village. Vaccination dates are as follows:

14 July: Epworth Close
27 July: Cassia Gardens
02 August: Irvine Villa

16 July: Frail Care staff
30 July: Aldersgate, Wesley Gardens and Maranatha Village
04 August: Annesley Gardens/Sheariton

This represents a major step in getting all residents and staff vaccinated within the next month. Individually and as a community, let us do all that we can to stay safe and well until then. We have come so far. Let's get this done!!!

Malcolm Stewart

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