

COVID-19: NEWSFLASH #77: WEDNESDAY 12 MAY 2021

INEVITABLY----SOME NOT SO GOOD NEWS

As we have been doing since mid-March 2020, CovidCom continues to keep abreast of what the Coronavirus is doing locally, nationally and globally. We continue to try to make proactive decisions, based on the best information at our disposal. It is not an easy task, but so far the decisions made have mainly been the right ones; the infection and recovery rates within MHA provide a useful yardstick, in this regard.

Three issues have been occupying CovidCom in the past couple of weeks:

1. The so-called 'third wave' has hit most countries, to a greater or lesser extent; currently India is a nightmare, whereas the UK, Spain and Germany are beginning to relax their Lockdown laws, and over 40000 Australians attended a major rugby match over the weekend. South Africa is expecting a third wave to hit during the next few weeks, and infection rates are climbing in some areas (not our Metro, at present, based on numbers reported). The advent of winter will increase the risk, and recent Mothers' Day gatherings are a cause for concern
2. Far more family and friends than anticipated have visited residents in CP Bradfield Frail Care, Maranatha Frail Care, Bob Zeiss Bedsitters and Epworth Close, but the worrying aspect of that is the high level of non-compliance by visitors with Government's laws regarding the wearing of masks while on MHA premises; some have even been quite aggressive in their attitude to this. This places residents and staff at increased risk, and could potentially undo all the good which has been achieved over the past fourteen months
3. Some residents have gone out for the day, or longer, and have been in large social gatherings while out; many seemed oblivious to the risks associated with that.

CovidCom met yesterday, to discuss what we should be doing in anticipation of the third wave potentially hitting our Metro before the end of May. Ever mindful that we need to be cautious and careful and proactive, and taking into account the onerous responsibilities which CovidCom carries, it was decided that the following will come into effect on Monday 17 May 2021, affecting CP Bradfield Frail Care (CPB), Maranatha Frail Care (MFC), Bob Zeiss Bedsitters (BZB) and Epworth Close (EC):

1. These facilities must go back to a 'locked in' status. This effectively means that visitors will not be able to enter the facilities other than to make use of the visitor corners/kuierhoekies, or the perimeter fences and gates (see below for more information on this), neither will residents be allowed to leave the premises, other than for medical-related matters
2. Residents will be required to self-isolate in their room for 7 days when returning from a visit to a medical facility or healthcare service provider
3. The access gate between Cassia Gardens and CPB/BZB will again be locked
4. The hairdresser servicing Epworth Close, CPB and BZB will be allowed to continue, but residents of Cassia Gardens will again not be allowed to make use of the service offered in the BZB salon
5. The visitor corner/kuierhoekie facility at CPB and BZB and at MFC will be reinstated. The protocols previously in place, regarding sanitizing, wearing of masks and no physical contact will, sadly, also need to be reinstated there, and at the fences/gates

These were not easy decisions to make. CovidCom will continue to monitor the behaviour of the virus and its variants on a daily basis, and the rules and regulations which have been re-introduced will be reviewed on at least a weekly basis. Our priority is, and has always been, to safeguard the lives of our residents and staff. We therefore ask all in the MHA family to please co-operate and comply, as we move into yet more uncertain times.

CovidCom would also like to share the following with you:

- While the decisions taken to revert to a 'locked in' position at CPB, MFC, BZB and EC don't directly affect our Village residents (apart from suspending the visiting of loved ones there), it is important to highlight the need for all Village residents and their visitors to continue to be vigilant, to wear a mask properly covering both mouth and nose whenever in a public place (basically, anywhere outside of your cottage), and to sanitize hands as frequently as possible. There is an alarming increase across the Metro and the country in non-compliance with these basic requirements (viz. the law of the land). It has been proven over the past year and more that these basic safety precautions save lives.
Use your head---don't spread!!!
- **Vaccination:**
 - This subject is on everyone's mind right now. Should I have it? When will I get it? Where will I have to go? What product will I receive? What do I have to do? What is the chance it will kill me?
 - MHA Management have been hard at work, behind the scenes, making sure that our frail residents are registered on the Department of Health database, and that all of our staff (especially our frontline nursing/caring staff) are registered and ready for vaccination
 - For those residents who live independently, and can easily attend to their own affairs, it is strongly recommended that you register on the Department of Health database. It takes two minutes to do; if you need help with that, ask a neighbour or your Manager. By registering, you get into the queue; you are not obliged to be vaccinated when your name comes up on the list, if that is your personal choice. If you don't register, but decide later on that you want to be vaccinated (for example, you may wish to fly overseas), you can expect to be at the back of the queue. Don't let that happen to you!
 - CovidCom will continue to keep residents updated regarding progress made with our ongoing dealings with the Department of Health and the Department of Social Development
- Today is International Nurses Day; it has been observed on May 12 every year since 1965, to honour nurses. May 12 was chosen to celebrate the day as it is the birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing.

Please take a moment today to reflect on the wonderful work that nurses have done, across the world, during this pandemic. Let us give thanks for the dedication and skill of the nursing and caring staff within MHA. Let us also remember, with gratitude, the nursing care that we, or a loved one, may have personally received during an illness or a medical procedure.

**Malcolm Stewart (who reminds us to remain cautious and careful---and to live in HOPE!)
CovidCom Chairman (and on behalf of the Board, Management, our staff, and CovidCom)**