

COVID-19: NEWSFLASH #70: MONDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2020

Science of Stupid is a comedic television series on the National Geographic Channel (so one can safely assume that it's not rubbish, although your scribe hasn't watched an episode). In this show, science of action is described in several different daily routine activities like sports, stunts, adventures, and things that should not be done at home. *Science of Stupid* shows videos of people hurting themselves, and explains the science behind them. How dumb is that?!

Add to this the well-known definition of Stupid: "Knowing the truth, seeing the truth, but still believing the lies".

Across Nelson Mandela Bay we continue to witness increasing acts of what can only be described as stupidity; individuals or groups who defy laws, don't wear masks or sanitize, or they gather in large groups, or are cheek by jowl in small groups. All too often one hears the weak defence: "But it's okay; we're just family". The Coronavirus (2019 strain) targets anyone and everyone, whether you are just in the wrong place at the wrong time, or if you think you should audition for a spot on *Science of Stupid*. The spread of Covid-19 in our Bay area is frighteningly real. Please understand this.

Our Bay is in the middle of a 'second surge' of infections; we are back where we were months ago, in terms of cases, hospitalizations, overloading of healthcare resources (people and facilities), and in deaths. To borrow the last line from a hit folk song of the 1960's called "*Where Have All the Flowers Gone?*"-----when will we ever learn?

An infectious disease specialist recently shed important light on Covid-19 spikes:

- Human behaviour is the major factor
- Governments, as well as individual people, differ in their response to the pandemic. Some follow Covid-19 precautions, such as physical distancing, hand-washing and mask-wearing. Others are not as prescriptive, or in restricting certain high risk activities. Some encourage or even mandate mask wearing and physical distancing in public areas. Others say it is a matter of personal choice
- In some cities, towns and communities, public places are closed or are practicing limitations (such as how many people are allowed inside at one time); others are operating normally
- However, the relationship between those precautions and cases of Covid-19 is clear: In areas where fewer people are wearing masks and more are gathering indoors to eat, drink, observe religious practices, attend funerals, celebrate and socialize, even with family, cases are on the rise
- Places where people live or work closely together (multigenerational households, long-term care facilities, prisons and some types of businesses) have also tended to see more spread of the virus
- Outbreaks at nursing homes and "superspreader" events---gatherings of people where one infected person or more transmits the virus to many others--- continue to occur.

Please, dear MHA family, help us to keep the virus away. Help us to protect our residents and staff.

Since the last Newsflash the MHA family has experienced another Covid-related death, and more positive cases are being reported. CovidCom met remotely again this morning, and seriously reviewed where MHA, as a caring organization, finds itself today. In summary:

- MHA's facilities and its people (residents and staff) are under increasing attack by the virus
- Residents are, in many cases, rapidly reaching breaking point; they have understandably 'had enough' of Covid-19
- Staff too are rapidly reaching breaking point; they constantly work in an unbelievably stressful environment
- MHA's procedures, protocols and disciplines remain intact, and relevant.

In view of the sustained Covid-19 onslaught, and the increase in infections both inside and outside of MHA, CovidCom unanimously agreed the following:

1. Halls, libraries and hairdressing salons will remain closed
2. Cleaners and cleaning services must remain away from our Village facilities
3. Gardeners and gardening services (other than MHA's own) must remain away from our Village facilities

These and other restrictions relating to the Villages will continue to be reviewed on a weekly basis. Those restrictions which still apply to our 'locked-in' facilities (CP Bradfield, Bob Zeiss Bedsitters, Maranatha Frail Care and Epworth Close), in particular regarding visitors not being allowed in, continue as is, until further notice.

We ask for your continued acceptance and compliance; we know that it isn't easy.

CovidCom also discussed the emotional matter of how to deal with the Christmas period, as it would apply to CP Bradfield, Bob Zeiss Bedsitters, Maranatha Frail Care and Epworth Close, where residents continue to live in a 'locked-in' environment, as they have been doing since late March. Some residents have asked to be allowed to visit family on Christmas Day, or for an extended period over Christmas/New Year. The brutal truth is that moving outside of the abovementioned facilities will expose those residents to the virus, which in turn puts other residents and our staff at risk. Sadly, the argument that "I will only be with family" doesn't hold water. Anyone leaving one of these facilities would have to self-isolate for ten days on return (as is the case with someone returning from receiving medical attention), and MHA does not have the manpower and logistical resources to deal with that. What unfolds within our City and within MHA over the next fortnight will dictate what final decision CovidCom must make regarding 'Christmas absence', but at this stage we ask all residents to carefully consider the threat, and MHA's predicament. It is more than likely that 'Christmas absence' will not be practically possible in 2020, and that a painful sacrifice may need to be made, in the best interests of all.

Many folk in MHA's villages are facing the same predicament, the same tough decisions.

One resident shared that, for the first time in her life, she will not be sharing Christmas with family (her choice) or, in 90 years, being able to attend a Christmas service in her church.

In so many ways, 2020 has been a year of sacrifice. We are a loving community; it is up to each and every one of us to be supportive and caring, as we fight the good fight, as we pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness (**1 Timothy 6:11**).

PLEASE ACT RESPONSIBLY. WE ARE STILL AT WAR.

COVID-19: NEWSFLASH #69: MONDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2020

Greetings to all residents, staff and those who are part of the MHA family.

The world seems to have resigned itself to being divided into two factions: those who care (about themselves, and others) and those who don't care (about themselves, and others). While this has been allowed to unfold, the virus is continuing on its destructive path. As at today, 58.7 million people across the world have been infected since March (768 000 in RSA), and 1.39 million people have died from Covid-19 (20 903 in RSA). This isn't a conspiracy, it's not a game; it's real. Within our Metro, people we know, people we work with or employ, our families and friends, people who are our neighbours, people who are our friends in a retirement village, are becoming infected. Sadly, within MHA our infection incidence is rising, and last week we had to deal with the first death within our community. We have been protected and blessed for so long now, but it was inevitable that this would happen. It doesn't diminish the sadness, though.

This morning one of our Bob Zeiss Bedsitter residents, who was in hospital on Friday but subsequently returned to her room, tested Covid positive. The upshot of this is that all Bedsitter residents have been confined to their rooms with immediate effect, and until further notice. CovidCom has had no hesitation in implementing this drastic measure; we have to protect all residents in BZB and in the adjoining CP Bradfield Frail Care, and at the same time do what we can to safeguard the employees and service providers who work in those two facilities.

The Board, Management and CovidCom urge each and every member of the MHA family to exercise extreme caution in your daily lives; wear a mask whenever you leave your cottage or room, sanitize as frequently and you can, limit your visits to any public place (supermarket or shop, coffee shop/restaurant), and please think long and hard before you visit with friends or family. The so-called 'second surge' isn't coming; it's here already, right on top of us all.

PLEASE ACT RESPONSIBLY. WE ARE STILL AT WAR.

COVID-19: NEWSFLASH #68: FRIDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2020

President Ramaphosa didn't really tell us anything new when he spoke to the nation via TV on Wednesday evening. We knew in advance about 'pandemic fatigue', we knew that the virus was again spreading across the country, we knew that our Metro is a worrying hotspot, and we knew that irresponsible behaviour in and around bars, restaurants, taverns and shebeens is the main cause of 'super-spreader' events. We also know that wearing of masks and safe distancing are the most significant ways in which we can avoid becoming infected, or spreading infection. What the President didn't say was that it is a distinct possibility that Mayors or Provincial Premiers may put additional, localized Lockdown measures in place, at very short notice. Nelson Mandela Bay would be right on top of that list. Time will tell if this is accurate, but it remains up to every citizen in the Metro to behave responsibly: wear a mask, practise safe distancing, think long and hard about making a trip outside of your home, continue to suck up the pain of not being with family and friends, and remember that anyone over 65 is at huge risk of becoming infected. Every resident within MHA knows all of this, and what to do about surviving Covid-19; it is up to you.

It's scary how the Covid landscape within MHA can change in less than a week. Since the last Newsflash (#67 on Tuesday 10 November) the following has happened (accurate up to noon today):

- A resident at Annesley Gardens has tested Covid positive, and is in hospital
- Two residents of Cassia Gardens were in close contact with that person, and so they are in isolation at home
- Our Professional Nurse/Counsellor was in close contact with the infected resident, and so she is in isolation
- A resident at Wesley Gardens remains infected, and is isolating at home
- We have two Frail Care residents in hospital (not necessarily Covid-related)

CovidCom members discussed these developments this morning, and are unanimous in deciding the following:

1. Gardeners and gardening services, privately employed by residents, will not be allowed onto Village premises as from Monday 16 November 2020, until further notice
2. Domestic housekeepers and domestic housekeeping service providers, privately employed by residents, will not be allowed onto Village premises as from Monday 16 November 2020, until further notice
3. Village Halls, including libraries, will be closed from Monday 16 November 2020, until further notice
4. External contractors may not enter the Village premises. This excludes those contractors refurbishing cottages for Life Right re-sale, as they would be confined to the cottage being worked on, and under the control of the Manager
5. Gardeners contracted by MHA will continue to service the common property in the Villages, under the strict control of the Managers

CovidCom will review these additional safety measures on a fortnightly basis, and all residents within MHA will continue to be kept informed.

COVID-19: NEWSFLASH #67: TUESDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2020

CovidCom members secretly hoped that another Newsflash in 2020 would not be necessary, but realistically we knew that the war against Covid-19 was not over, and that our work would continue, as it has certainly done. We communicate daily.

Covid cases in our Metro have shot up tenfold in just two weeks; hospitals are filling up and ICUs are at full capacity. As a result of what the authorities have described as 'mass disobedience', we are witnessing a massive outbreak of new cases, sometimes with up to 500 cases a day, from 238 on 11 October, to 349 on 19 October, and to 3584 on 6 November. It is spreading across the city; from Motherwell to Mill Park; from Summerstrand to Soweto-on-Sea; from Newton Park to New Brighton. It largely involves people who have what the President is calling 'pandemic fatigue'; people who either think they are immune because they have survived thus far, or because they think that they aren't in the 'at risk' category, or because they just don't care any longer. It also involves masses who are ignorant of the destruction which the virus can cause, or that simply wearing a face mask can make a huge 'life or death' difference. Sadly, it also involves innocent folk, getting on with their (retired) lives, who get infected via careless family and friends, or from a 'wrong place at the wrong time' encounter with a stranger, like a cashier or a clerk.

Our Metro of 1.1 million residents, which has already seen 75000 jobs shed this year, can ill afford another lockdown. We are experiencing a resurgence, and this increase in cases has not been seen anywhere else in South Africa's metropolitan areas. We are heading for

trouble; we are sure that you realize this, and know how you can contribute to the war effort.

Regarding MHA, this is the Covid history since March:

FACILITY	# OF POSITIVE RESIDENTS	# OF POSITIVE STAFF	# DE-ISOLATED	# STILL ISOLATED
CP Bradfield FC		12	12	
CP Bradfield FC	10		10	
Bob Zeiss Bedsitters	1		1	
Maranatha FC		6	6	
Maranatha FC	10		9	1
Maranatha Village		1	1	
Maintenance		1	1	
Aldersgate	2		2	
Irvine Villa	2		1	1
Epworth Close	1		1	
Annesley Gardens	1			1
Wesley Gardens	1		0	1
Head Office		1	1	
TOTALS	28	21	45	4

Because of four new Covid infections at MHA in the past week, and our other recent cases, CovidCom met on 9 November 2020 to decide what new, bold decisions need to be made in order to protect the lives of our residents and our staff. This Newsflash provides details of what was discussed and agreed at that meeting. Please carefully read how some changes will directly affect you; if you need any clarification, please don't hesitate to ask your Manager. All changes are effective from Wednesday 11 November 2020:

CP BRADFIELD FRAIL CARE (CPB)/MARANATHA FRAIL CARE (MFC)/BOB ZEISS BEDSITTERS (BZB)/EPWORTH CLOSE (EC):

- No visitors will be allowed onto the premises. Therefore, the 'kuierhoekies'/visiting tables will be closed
- Visiting of residents through the security fences may continue, without appointment, provided that there is strict compliance regarding social distancing (1 metre on either side of the fence), no physical contact, and mandatory wearing of masks
- Visitors to MFC may continue the current practice of briefly greeting loved ones at the gate leading to the patio/entrance door, provided that distancing protocols are strictly adhered to. No appointment is necessary
- Hairdressing services are suspended
- The 'invisible wall' between CPB and BZB is reinstated, so there will be no visiting between the two facilities, neither will CPB residents be allowed into the BZB lounge
- All external contractors (i.e. excluding MHA Maintenance staff) are not allowed onto the premises, and any work in progress must be put on hold
- Church services, only recently introduced, are suspended

VILLAGES:

- Hairdressing services at Aldersgate and Annesley Gardens/Sheariton are suspended

- Community Halls are closed, other than for access to the libraries
- Regarding libraries, the Managers will ensure that residents use the library to swap books, and not for social gathering purposes
- Church services and other large gatherings in the Halls are suspended
- Blood Pressure clinics are suspended
- External staff (housekeepers and/or gardeners contracted individually by residents) may continue to come to the Village cottages to provide their services, but Managers will impress upon the residents involved that such service providers remain the responsibility of the residents, and that the residents must ensure that the service providers comply with all the laid-down protocols around sanitizing, safe distancing, and the disciplined wearing of masks throughout their presence on site

RELATED MATTERS DISCUSSED/AGREED:

- These decisions made by CovidCom are notwithstanding the prospect that President Ramaphosa will announce this week measures and/or warnings of some Lockdown-type restrictions to halt the growing resurgence of Covid-19. CovidCom is aware that some of its decisions will be unpopular, as were some decisions taken since mid-March, but all are taken in an endeavour to halt the spread of the virus, and thus save lives. Residents are encouraged to view them as such, and not as punitive measures
- If and how CovidCom will be able to accommodate any requests by residents at CPB/MFC/BZB/EC to be allowed to leave the premises to spend some time with loved ones over the Christmas period is currently under review, especially around the requirement for such residents to have to self-isolate for 10 days on return. This is a complicated matter which requires further investigation and debate, and so remains under review
- All issues discussed at CovidCom's 9 November meeting will be reviewed on a fortnightly basis, and will be informed by a combination of Government's decisions, the infection rate in the Metro and beyond, the infection rate within MHA, and any other pertinent factors.

We are all living in difficult times, wherever we are on Earth. More than ever, we need to live in a spirit of community, hope, love for our neighbours, concern for others, obedience, and faith. We need to be a part of the solution, not the problem. Oh yes; we also need to pray!