

**COVID-19: NEWSFLASH #84: FRIDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2021
STILL MOVING FORWARD, STILL STEP BY STEP**



On Monday CovidCom met once again. It was our twenty fourth formal meeting held since March last year; yet another meeting where the war against Covid was discussed in detail; where the physical, mental and emotional health and welfare of residents and staff was reviewed; where decisions were taken, after much deliberating, on what MHA should or shouldn't be doing or changing, as we as the MHA community continue to do battle with Covid and within ourselves; where CovidCom's members continue to wrestle with the huge responsibility of making the right decisions affecting almost 700 residents and staff and the entire connected MHA family; and where the content of the next Newsflash was agreed, and formal minutes of the meeting issued.

There have been times during the past eighteen months when CovidCom have felt that they were carrying the weight of the world on their shoulders; making tough and often unpopular decisions which were all aimed at one goal: saving lives. We are reminded of something written by Madiba: "In our language there is a saying, Ndiwelimilambo enamagama – I have crossed famous rivers. It means that one has travelled and, in the process, gained much experience" He then went on to write: "We have not taken the final step of our journey, but the first step on a longer and even more difficult road."

All of us---CovidCom, the Board and Management team, residents and staff and their families and friends, our business partners and service providers---must continue to take steps, step by step, big or small, on the long and difficult road ahead. We should continue to trust in God for His guidance and protection, and we must never underestimate the courage, resilience and spirit of community that has carried us through the Covid war, thus far.

At CovidCom's meeting on 13 September 2021 the following was agreed, and which will be effective from Monday 20 September 2021:

- All Village halls, which re-opened on 12 August 2021, will now be able to operate as they did pre-Covid, with the only exception being that Government's current rulings regarding capacity, safe distancing and wearing of masks must still be adhered to (refer to your Manager for guidance, if necessary). Access by 'outsiders' such as ministers, gym/dance instructors and the like will be permitted without restriction, as would any other visitors
- Regrettably, our Frail Care and Bedsitter residents will remain 'locked in' for a while longer. This continues to be CovidCom's most challenging dilemma, but infection rates across the City are still cause for great concern. If we open up these facilities to visitors there will be a stream of traffic, as happened when we briefly re-opened a few months ago, and the risks are just too great to manage at this stage. One bit of good news for Frail Care and Bedsitter residents is that church services will be resumed. Details of the arrangements being made will be announced shortly

- Still on the subject of Frail Care and Bedsitter residents, CovidCom deliberated over the continued need for an isolation period after a resident goes to a medical facility (GP, dentist, hospital, clinic etc). It was decided that the need to isolate or not, on return, will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by Matrons Marx or Windell, and you are urged to discuss your plans in advance, so that 'safety first' decisions can be agreed upon
- The visitor corners/kuierhoekies at CP Bradfield Frail Care/Bob Zeiss Bedsitters and Maranatha Frail Care remain popular, but some instance of abuse of the rules continues. Residents and visitors are urged to comply (eg. respecting the barrier in place, no physical contact between resident and visitor)
- Hairdresser services for CP Bradfield and Bob Zeiss Bedsitter residents will be resumed. Matron Marx will provide more detail to residents shortly.

All residents are again reminded that having been vaccinated does NOT make one bullet-proof. You can STILL catch the Covid virus (but it is extremely unlikely that you will require hospitalization or ventilation, or that you will die). Equally important is the fact that you can STILL become infected and pass the virus onto others. For these reasons it is so important to continue to be careful and cautious in your everyday behaviours; where you go, who you interact with at close quarters, compliance with the safety rules around sanitizing, wearing masks and social distancing. You all know this stuff!

THE VEXED QUESTION OF VACCINATION

In the last Newsflash it was stated that in the next edition (this one) CovidCom would offer some supportive comments on vaccination. We aren't going to do that!

Across the country and across the world the debates around vaccination get noisier every day (punish or prejudice those who aren't vaccinated, make it mandatory, refuse entry to pubs, restaurants, schools, universities, sporting events, airports etc unless you have been jabbed and carry a 'vaccination passport').

Add to the mix the noise made via social media; their anti-vaccine content is usually about the negative effects of vaccines, but is rarely created by health care professionals. They can create fear in their audience and yet almost a quarter of anti-vaccine social media content contains conspiracy theories.

This is why CovidCom won't be adding any fuel to the fire. MHA is in an almost unique position because virtually all residents and staff elected to be vaccinated, helping hugely in creating a protective barrier around our various residential facilities. This, together with the responsible behaviour of the MHA family, is primarily why our infection rate remains almost zero.

Complacency could be our undoing, though, so let us continue to look after ourselves, and others, until this war is over.

Malcolm Stewart

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