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COVID-19 news from SAMED, Government and Abroad.

PORT HEALTH DURBAN CLOSURE

After it came to our attention that there was a closure, SAMED contacted Port Health Durban. While they do not yet have an official communication on the matter, they did confirm that the port health offices in Durban were closed due to a COVID-19 case among the staff.

While they do not have a definite date when they will be able to resume their duties in the office, they confirmed that the standing area is still open and inspectors are still boarding vessels for inspection.

While the offices are closed, they will not have access to their electronic systems, but inspections and documentation arrangement can be made by calling: 083 301 3340.

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NDOH SPECIFICATION GUIDELINES ON COVID-19 RELATED MEDICAL DEVICES

The National Department of Health issued a guideline for developing tender specifications and procuring the required standard and quality of personal protective equipment (PPE), body bags, disinfectants, alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) and thermometers for use during the COVID-19 pandemic. The specifications will give guidance to National Treasury for updating suggested product pricing.

Download the specification guidelines [here](#).

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GUIDANCE ON COVID-19 ROUTINE & DEEP CLEANING

The National Health Laboratory Services together with the National Institute for Communicable Diseases have released a guidance on routine and deep cleaning of workplaces when COVID-19 positive cases have been identified. This includes guidance on:

- Approved disinfectants
- What to do if approved disinfectants are unavailable
- Having a plan to clean and disinfect
- Frequency of cleaning/disinfection, and
- Terminal/Deep Cleaning when COVID-19 case is identified/suspected

Download the guidance [here](#).

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CONTACT TRACING IN THE WORKPLACE

The National Health Laboratory Service, the National Institute for Occupational Health and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases have published a guidance on contact tracing in the workplace. This includes:

- When contact tracing should be initiated
- Contact identification at work, and
- Confidentiality considerations

Download the guidance [here](#).

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SAHPRA has updated the list of authorised providers for Serology Antibody Test Kits and Molecular (PCR) test kit.

Download the updated listing [here](#).

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FREE ANTI COVID-19 ‘BEHAVIOUR CHANGE’ CAMPAIGN TOOLKITS FOR BUSINESS USE

The Solidarity Fund launched its Citizens in Solidarity campaign to help drive positive and healthy behaviour as a key tool in South Africa’s fight against the spread of the Coronavirus as the country braces for its peak.

The digital toolkit includes brand guidelines and a set of free ready-to-use communications “assets” – posters, adverts, digital updates - in multiple languages that you can apply across your platforms and places of work. The central theme of the campaign is to create awareness and educate citizens/staff on how to avoid contracting and spreading the virus. The specific messages include washing hands, wearing a mask and continuing with social distancing.

If you’re a brand or business that’s looking to collaborate, use [this link](#) to download the Citizens in Solidarity campaign toolkit.

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COVID-19: EXCESSIVE PRICING - A TOTAL OF 23 CONSENT AGREEMENTS CONFIRMED BY SA COMPETITION TRIBUNAL

The South African Competition Tribunal has confirmed a further five consent agreements relating to COVID-19 excessive pricing as orders. The consent agreements represent settlements reached between the South African Competition Commission and firms alleged to have engaged in COVID-19 unlawful pricing conduct. This brings the total number of consent agreements confirmed by the Tribunal thus far to 23. The Tribunal’s orders represent full and final settlement of these matters. Below are the latest:

- Vasilis Cleaning Supplies
- Sanitech
- Caprichem
- West Coast Hardware t/a Brights Hardware
- Farpoint Trading t/a Mica Durban North

[Click here](#) to see more details as reported through a Bowmans communication.

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COVID-19 DEVELOPMENTS

TRACKING THE PANDEMIC



Gauteng	Western Cape	KwaZulu Natal	Free State	Eastern Cape	Limpopo	Mpumalanga	North West	Northern Cape
71,488	72,156	16,743	3,034	40,401	1,950	2,353	6,842	888
Daily Increase								
4,597	1,218	924	230	2,320	165	180	432	68

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known infections to 205,721. The national death toll is 3 310. So far, almost 98,000 people have recovered, with the recovery rate hovering around the 47% mark. Gauteng, which is becoming the new epicentre of the outbreak, has seen yet another spike in its fatality rate with 50 deaths. The Western Cape now accounts for 35% of the country's COVID-19 cases, with an increase of over 1 400 new infections in the last cycle. The recovery rate is just under 48% with more than 1,860,000 tests conducted in total.

The [Health Department says it will not close its doors despite four employees contracting COVID-19](#). Three workers from the national department and ministerial office are self-isolating or in quarantine after testing positive for the virus. The department says the fourth member had severe symptoms and was now in hospital.

FOCUS ON COVID-19 TESTS

[Government puts R18m into quest to produce local COVID-19 test kits](#): The government has awarded R18m to **seven local companies**, organisations and researchers developing test kits and reagents for SARS-Cov-2. The rapid spread of the coronavirus since it emerged in China late in 2019 has precipitated a surge in demand for test kits and reagents, and sent governments around the world scrambling to source supplies. The global shortage is one of the biggest constraints facing both state and private sector laboratories, which are now **rationing tests to ensure they reach the sickest and most vulnerable patients**. SA now sources all its reagents from international companies, but increasing global demand, fluctuating exchange rates and limited transport options are affecting supply, resulting in an urgent need to source components locally. The Department of Higher Education, Science & Technology issued a joint call for proposals with the **Medical Research Council** and the Technology Innovation Agency and has made three awards for the development of reagents and four for rapid point-of-care test kits. The recipients of the awards for developing diagnostic reagents are the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (**CSIR**); **a joint initiative between CapeBio Technologies and the CSIR**; and the **Biopharming Research Unit at the University of Cape Town**. Biopharming uses genetically modified plants to produce pharmaceutical proteins. The awards for **developing rapid test kits**, which are expected to deliver results within as little as 15 minutes have been made to **Medical Diagnostech; Mintek; Gnowmix; and Diagnostic Aptamer Technologies-Aminotek**. The projects are expected to produce results within six months. Both test kits and reagents will have to be approved by the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority before they can be marketed or sold in SA.

[Antibody testing – the missing weapon in the fight against COVID-19 in South Africa](#)

In a detailed, and fairly technical article published by the Daily Maverick, six local doctors (Eftyhia Vardas, Cathy van Rooyen, Jean Maritz, Marieke Brauer, Louis Marcus and Inéz Rossouw) explain the role of antibody tests and argue that the missing weapon in SA's response to COVID-19 is the antibody blood test that measures evidence of infection or exposure to a virus. These are serology tests that analyse blood to detect SARS-CoV-2 antibodies that are formed by the immune system in response to infection with this virus. This type of test is **affordable and easily scalable on robotic instruments** that already exist in most laboratories, giving results for thousands of tested people within a few hours. Exactly this type of test is needed to define the important public health question of what is the real number of people infected with SARS-CoV-2, and to better estimate how serious this infection is by allowing the calculation of the case fatality rate (CFR). The authors say that the main reason why these serological antibody tests are not available in SA is because the regulatory authority for in vitro diagnostic testing (IVDs), the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (**SAHPRA**) is **being overly cautious in not allowing these tests to be used by professional clinical laboratories**. SAHPRA argues that there is still no definitive proof that antibodies are protective against reinfection with SARS-CoV-2, or how long those antibodies will last and what concentration exactly is needed to get this protection in humans. The article provides further details of the SAHPRA's processes and responses to local and international data about the advantages and need for these antibody tests.

CLINICAL, MEDICAL, SCIENTIFIC

The COVID-19 pandemic is [hitting private healthcare, with doctors and other healthcare practitioners losing income](#). But medical schemes have rejected a proposal by private health sector representatives that would see them tapping into funds to help them stay afloat. They say they're available to lend an ear - but that the funds must stay put. The Council for Medical Schemes has declined a proposal by private health sector practitioners that would see medical aid schemes tap into funds help them stay afloat, as the economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak puts the future of medical practices in jeopardy. The pandemic has put many businesses at risk for closure across the country, and private sector practitioners have not been an exception, with many specialists having shut their doors since the beginning of the lockdown in March. Last week, private practitioners made a plea for assistance to medical aids and banks, through industry groups and associations including the South African Private Practitioner's Forum (SAPPF), the South African Medical and Dental Practitioners Association, and the South African Medical Association.

[University of Johannesburg is developing mechanical ventilators](#) that can provide oxygen to multiple

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engineering sciences department, said it basically automates the operation of an ambu-bag, a simple hand-held device used to provide positive pressure ventilation to patients. Madushele said they were in talks with medical experts to ensure the device could perform under different in-hospital scenarios. "This will be developed by chemical and electrical engineers, so we need technicians' inputs now." The team will be making the software and designs freely available to ensure any producer around the world can manufacture the device.

[Britain set to buy up another potential vaccine](#)

Britain is about to clinch a supply deal for 60 million doses of a potential COVID-19 vaccine. The clinical trials are only due to begin in September, but the drugmaker Sanofi is confident it will get approval by the first half of 2021. This is the same drugmaker that caused uproar earlier in 2020 when it said American patients would be the first to get any vaccine it develops. This is Britain's second deal like this – it has already agreed to buy 100 million doses of another vaccine by Oxford and AstraZeneca. There are more than 100 vaccines being developed and tested around the world, with governments trying to secure supplies even before they are proven to work.

[WHO admits evidence pointing to airborne Covid-19 spread](#)

The World Health Organisation has conceded that there is a growing body of evidence emerging that indicates the spread of COVID-19 is not just limited to droplets. Rather, the virus can float in particles in the air, infecting people who breathe them in. This could, in turn, have a major impact on the WHO's guidelines for avoiding infection.

The BBC reports that a [Spanish study has cast doubt on the feasibility of herd immunity](#) as a way of tackling the coronavirus pandemic. The study of more than 60,000 people estimates that around just 5% of the Spanish population has developed antibodies, the medical journal the Lancet reported. Herd immunity is achieved when enough people become immune to a virus to stop its spread. Around 70% to 90% of a population needs to be immune to protect the uninfected.

ECONOMICS, POLITICS, EDUCATION, ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL

The Special Investigating Unit said its office was piling up with complaints of [alleged corruption relating to COVID-19 and the multi-million rand Solidarity Fund](#). It said the graft complaints related to the manufacture of face masks, the distribution of food parcels and awareness campaigns. Spokesperson Kaizer Kganyago said they're consolidating reports linked to the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund. "We have decided that we'll do a COVID-19 probe that will look into all the issues, so that we can deal with investigations that require our immediate attention.

A recent Daily Maverick webinar looked at if and how the COVID-19 crisis will [change the way we invest and the types of investments we make](#); how the societies can afford to transition to sustainable and responsible investing (referred to as the "just transition"; and whether they can afford not to.

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COVID-19 EVENTS

[JOIN SAMED FOR A BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY FORUM: 9 JULY 2020, 14:00](#)



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MEDBRIEF PPS WEBINAR WITH PROF ROBIN WOOD ON COVID-19 AND VACCINES



To register, [click here](#).

Please submit questions to Prof Wood beforehand in writing.

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IHRM: Webinar Update on the Impact of COVID-19

IHRM invites you to join them for a webinar on 31 July at 09h00 when Christoff Raath, Joint CEO of Insight Actuaries and Consultants, will provide an updated analysis on the Impact of COVID-19 on Medical Schemes and Private Hospitals, as South Africa reaches the peak of the pandemic.

For more details or to register [click here](#).

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SAMED is the voice of the South African medical technology industry. The not-for-gain-association was formed in 1985 and aims to provide members with a collective, objective and credible platform to engage with stakeholders. SAMED's members include individual medical technology companies, associate members and associations.

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