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COVID-19 news from SAMED, Government and Abroad.

LOCAL COVID-19 SWAB EXTRACTION KITS TO BE PRODUCED AT SCALE

South Africa is on track to manufacture its own Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) sample purification kits in large quantities within six months, creating a steady local supply that will speed up testing and reduce the country's reliance on international suppliers amid intense global demand.

The CSIR's Dr Previn Naicker says the technology being developed by his team is open source in that it would generate pure samples from nasal and throat swabs that can be tested for the presence of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) viral RNA on any platform. The work is being funded by the Department of Science and Innovation, the South African Medical Research Council and the Technology Innovation Agency.

A reliable local supply of sample purification reagents also addresses the specific problem of patient swabs becoming non-viable for testing because of the lengthy backlogs caused by a lack of reagents. Not only do such long waiting periods compromise test results for individual patients, it compromises the entire disease management process that relies on quarantine along with quick contact tracing and testing. [Read more](#)

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An interview with Professor Debby Bradshaw, South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC)

The South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) recently published a report which included information on both natural (age, disease, infection) and unnatural deaths registered on the national population register.

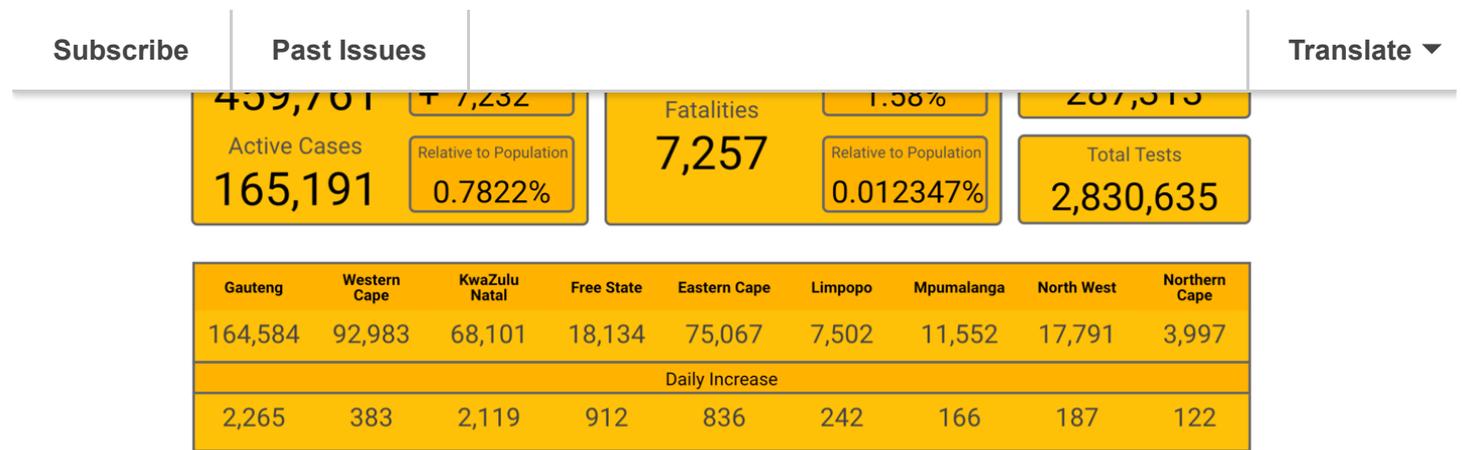
The findings show that by the second week of July, there were 59% more deaths from natural causes than would have been expected based on historical data. In her commentary, Prof Debbie Bradshaw, Chief Specialist Scientist and a co-author of the report, said the timing and geographic pattern leaves no room to question whether this is associated with the COVID-19 epidemic.

“The report we put out now is showing that in some provinces, in particular Eastern Cape and Gauteng, that the gap between the number of COVID-19 deaths and excess deaths is big. It is important for us to do more work to get some research done to find out exactly what is causing that. It could be that there are people with COVID-19 not getting to health facilities or people dying at home. It has been seen in other countries as well,” Bradshaw said. [Read more](#)

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COVID-19 DEVELOPMENTS

TRACKING THE PANDEMIC



Health Minister, [Dr Zweli Mkhize has warned that the peak for COVID-19 infections will likely continue into September.](#) "What we expect is that the numbers are still likely to increase. We expect, in terms of the models, that in August and September we will still have high numbers. Each province has got its own trajectory." The minister stressed that if the country does not practice social behavioural changes, the virus will continue to spread. "The numbers will always grow depending on how well as a community we can break the cycle."

Meanwhile, [Business for South Africa, said it expected the national COVID-19 infection rate to peak during August 2020,](#) while daily mortalities will peak by late-August or early September. The business lobby group says SA businesses are likely to face additional job losses of about 1.5 million by the end of the year – and that it will take a minimum of two years for the South African economy to recover to pre-COVID-19 levels.

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT AND ALLEGATIONS OF FRAUD AND CORRUPTION

167 companies got tenders for COVID-19 work, Gauteng's health department says. The [highest-paid company received a tender](#) for R159 million (Diaane Consulting Services which provided surgical masks, FFP2 masks and sanitisers.). The lowest was paid R50 000 (African Delight Catering). In light of recent allegations, a cloud of alleged impropriety hangs over the department. There have been growing calls within the ANC in Gauteng and its alliance partners for [Premier David Makhura to act more decisively against corruption, with some calling for Health MEC Bandile Masuku to step aside,](#) even in the middle of a health crisis.

As the Business Day reports, [Parliament will conduct a probe into PPE procurement corruption](#) claims, expecting that finance minister Tito Mboweni and Treasury officials will be called to give statements to two finance committees next week.

CLINICAL, MEDICAL, SCIENTIFIC

South Africa is on [track to manufacture its own COVID-19 sample purification kits](#) in large quantities within six months, creating a steady local supply that will speed up testing and reduce the country's reliance on international suppliers amid intense global demand. The CSIR's Dr Previn Naicker says the **technology being developed is open source in that it would generate pure samples from nasal and throat swabs that can be tested for the presence of SARS-CoV-2 viral RNA on any platform.** The work is being funded by the Department of Science and Innovation, the South African Medical Research Council and the Technology Innovation Agency. A reliable local supply of sample purification reagents also addresses the specific problem of patient swabs becoming non-viable for testing because of the lengthy backlogs caused by a lack of reagents. Not only do such long waiting periods compromise test results for individual patients, it compromises the entire disease management process that relies on quarantine along with quick contact tracing and testing. "There are testing facilities that are not running at full capacity because there are not enough diagnostic reagents," Naicker says. "The project will ensure that we close that gap and reduce the turnaround time of testing." As positive cases in South Africa continue to increase at an alarming rate, Naicker says the portion of positive cases in relation to the tests conducted shows that South Africa is under-testing.

A global team of scientists has identified [21 drugs that could stop the replication of SARS-CoV-2.](#) The scientists investigated the existing drugs by means of extensive testing and validation studies, which **included the evaluation of the drugs on human lung biopsies infected with the virus.** They also looked at the synergies some drugs formed with remdesivir and looked at the doses and efficacy of their antiviral capacity. Led by Sumit Chanda, a professor at Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute The scientists found the following about the 21 drugs:

- 13 of the drugs were tested in previous clinical trials and could work effectively in safe doses.
- Two of the drugs, known as astemizole (for allergies) and clofazimine (usually used for leprosy), are already FDA approved. Remdesivir has received emergency use status for COVID-19 from the

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Pharmaceutical company [Pfizer said other developed countries would not get a lower price for its coronavirus vaccine than what it will charge the United States](#) under a contract announced last week. The US government agreed to pay nearly \$2 billion to buy enough of a COVID-19 vaccine being developed by Pfizer and German biotech BioNTech to inoculate 50 million people at a price of \$39 for a two-dose treatment course. Pfizer executives said they expect people will need to receive continued vaccinations for a number of years to maintain herd immunity globally, either because immunity may diminish over time or the virus will mutate. The mRNA technology employed in the BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine "is ideal for both: you can boost and boost and boost without losing efficacy," said Pfizer Chief Executive Albert Bourla. "And also, you can move very fast from one type of vaccine to another by simply modifying the (genetic) code." The vaccine's price could change once the pandemic period ends, compared with its initial decision aimed at ensuring broadest access.

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COVID-19 EVENTS



Partnerships for COVID-19 in Africa

31st July 2020
4.00pm - 5.30pm (EAT)



Testing, tracking & treating

						
Moderator	Keynote Speaker	Speaker	Speaker	Speaker	Speaker	Speaker
Dr. Amit N. Thakker <i>Executive Chairman Africa Health Business</i>	Dr. John Nkengasong <i>Director Africa CDC</i>	Ms. Renuka Gadde <i>Vice President Global health BD</i>	Mr. Marc Matthews <i>Business Development Director Africa LumiraDx</i>	Ms. Ada Mwangola <i>Director Social & Political Pillars Kenya Vision 2030</i>	Mr. Kennedy Njau <i>Medical Director Sub saharan Africa Astrazeneca</i>	Ms. Manal Halwani <i>Healthcare Industry Leader & Expert EMEA South SAP</i>

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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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