



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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INTERNAL MEMO

Date:	15 May 2020		
To:	Dr ZL Mkhize, MP Minister of Health	From:	Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) on COVID-19

ST AUGUSTINE HOSPITAL OUTBREAK OF COVID-19 – INTERIM RERORT

Background

Following the nosocomial outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID -19) at Netcare St Augustine's Hospital, a detailed investigation and scientific analysis was undertaken by Prof Richard Lessells, Prof Yunus Moosa, and Prof Tulio de Oliveira at the request of MAC chairperson, Prof Salim Abdool Karim. This group put together an interim report outlining their preliminary findings and recommendations.

The report was presented to the Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID 19 for review and discussion.

Report findings

- Between 9 March and 20 April 2020, 112 confirmed cases were identified at St Augustine Hospital (37 patients and 75 staff), and 12 deaths occurred.
- It is hypothesized that a transmission from a patient attending the emergency department for investigation of COVID-19, to another patient that presented to the emergency department at the same time (who was later transferred to the cardiac intensive care unit).
- The infection then spread rapidly through the hospital involving patients on at least 5 wards.
- Spread was facilitated by the frequent movement of patients and health care workers between wards.
- Phylogenetic analysis supports a unique introduction followed by widespread transmission.
- This outbreak highlighted how quickly and easily SARS-CoV-2 can spread through the hospital setting.

Learning points

- The report highlights the need for strengthen infection prevention and control (IPC) systems throughout hospitals to reduce the risk of similar outbreaks.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) is important, however only one component of a comprehensive IPC approach.

- An important observation is that there have been no nosocomial transmissions in the COVID-19 ward, even though 4% of the nurses in the hospital had acquired SARS-CoV-2 infection.

The lessons learnt and recommendations from this report provide valuable information on how to work towards preventing outbreaks in other hospitals.

Kindly see attached the full interim report on a nosocomial outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) at Netcare St Augustine's Hospital – 30 April 2020.

Kind regards,



PROFESSOR SALIM S. ABDOOL KARIM
OVERARCHING CHAIRPERSON: MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON COVID-19
DATE: 15 May 2020

CC:

- » **Dr T Pillay (Acting Director-General: Health)**
- » **Dr S Zungu (Project Lead: Sectoral Response to Covid-19)**
- » **Dr Y Pillay (Deputy Director-General: Communicable Diseases; Non-communicable Diseases; Treatment, Prevention and Rehabilitation)**