



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Enquiries: Prof S Abdool Karim
E-mail: salim.abdoolkarim@caprisa.org

INTERNAL MEMO

Date:	22 May 2020		
To:	The Honorable Dr ZL Mkhize, Minister of Health	From:	Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) on COVID-19

ADVISORY ON DISINFECTION TUNNELS FOR PREVENTING SARS-COV2 TRANSMISSION

Problem

Are the disinfectant tunnels being installed at entrances of shopping malls and public transport (Gautrain and Soweto Taxi rank) or the spraying chemicals onto humans safe and effective in reducing the risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2?

MAC on COVID-19 review of evidence

- A literature review, including World Health Organisation (WHO)¹ and Pan American Health Organisation (P) recommendations, studies from West Africa during the 2016 Ebola outbreak², and chemical exposure amongst cleaning staff demonstrated toxic effects of chemicals, especially halogen-based compounds causing skin, eye and respiratory irritation.
- Chlorine and other chemicals converts to hydrochloric acid (HCL) leading to damage of the airways.
- Respiratory damage can potentially increase the risk of SARS-CoV2 acquisition and may enhance disease.
- **South African legislation protecting humans and the environment:** Hazardous Substance Act (1973); Occupational Health & Safety Act (1993); National Environmental Management Act (1998).
- *Refer to presentation for detailed information.*

¹<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/cleaning-and-disinfection-of-environmental-surfaces-in-the-context-of-covid-19>

² Mehtar *et al.* Antimicrobial Resistance and Infection Control (2016) 5:45. DOI 10.1186/s13756-016-0144-

Recommendations

- The available evidence indicates that the spraying of humans with disinfectants is harmful to the eyes, skin and the respiratory tract.
- Not only is there no evidence that spraying humans with disinfectants prevents transmission of SARS-CoV-2, it is more likely that this increases the risk of acquiring SARS-CoV-2 through the mucosal damage in the respiratory tract.
- Chemical spraying of humans by any route, including disinfectant tunnels is strongly condemned.
- As spray tunnels are continuing to proliferate, a public statement is needed advising the public to avoid being sprayed or entering spray tunnels installed for SARS-CoV-2 prevention.

Thank you for consideration of this advisory.

Kind regards,



PROFESSOR SALIM S. ABDOOL KARIM

OVERARCHING CHAIRPERSON: MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON COVID-19

DATE: 22 May 2020

CC:

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