

31 March 2020

Dear Randjes Residents

This is our 4th COVID19 communication and we can start with some good news - Una Neppe has tested negative for the Corona virus! We are all very grateful and relieved for Una. We don't know yet when Una will be discharged from hospital.

Unfortunately this communication also brings some unpleasant news.....

Up until yesterday 30 March walking on the Estate has been allowed, as long as walkers complied with the rules of walking on their own or as couples who live together. Unfortunately a number of news reports (702) and print media (The Citizen & others) have now clarified that NO WALKING can take place anywhere - including inside complexes and gated estates.

"The Citizen - 30 March

The SA Police Service (SAPS) has clarified that South African citizens will not be allowed to take walks themselves, walk with their dogs or go jogging even if they live in closed estates or complexes and confine their movements to these areas.

Many middle- to upper-class South Africans live in sectional title estates. From apartment buildings with gardens around them to golf estates and other estates.

In the first few days of lockdown, most body corporates had told their residents that they would be allowed to move freely within these privately owned areas, provided they observed social distancing.

Reports had previously suggested government had banned only jogging and dog walking on public streets, but that these activities could still continue within private estates and complexes.

That now appears to be a thing of the past.

The police said in a statement: "Following several enquiries about residents being able to walk or jog within their security estates/complexes, the regulations also apply to people living within estates/complexes meaning NO walking, jogging or walking of pets within closed estates/complexes is allowed."

We are a gated estate and must comply with this measure. Please take note therefore that walking/running is now prohibited on the Estate until further notice, including trips to the Post Rooms.

Anyone ignoring this rule and found walking on the Estate (other than going to fetch a meal or buy essentials from Resthaven) will be fined R1 000.

We know that this will be extremely difficult and disappointing for those of you who walk or run on our roads everyday but this does not have to stop you from exercising inside your home. You can walk on the spot while watching TV. You can still pop out onto your balcony or patio to get your daily dose of sunshine. Please just stay at/in your homes and do not engage with other Residents.

A longish but important read in understanding how epidemics work by epidemiologist - Jonathan Smith

Hey everybody, as an infectious disease epidemiologist (although a lowly one), at this point feel morally obligated to provide some information on what we are seeing from a transmission dynamic perspective and how they apply to the social distancing measures. Like any good scientist I have noticed two things that are either not articulated or not present in the “literature” of social media.

Specifically, I want to make two aspects of these measures very clear and unambiguous.

First, we are in the very infancy of this epidemic’s trajectory. That means even with these measures we will see cases and deaths continue to rise globally, nationally, and in our own communities in the coming weeks. Our hospitals will be overwhelmed, and people will die that didn’t have to. This may lead some people to think that the social distancing measures are not working. They are. They may feel futile. They aren’t. You will feel discouraged. You should. This is normal in chaos. This enemy that we are facing is very good at what it does; we are not failing. We need everyone to hold the line as the epidemic inevitably gets worse. This is not my opinion; this is the unforgiving math of epidemics for which I and my colleagues have dedicated our lives to understanding with great nuance, and this disease is no exception. We know what will happen; I want to help the community brace for this impact. Stay strong and with solidarity knowing with absolute certainty that what you are doing is saving lives, even as people begin getting sick and dying around you. You may feel like giving in. Don’t.

Second, although social distancing measures have been (at least temporarily) well-received, there is an obvious-but-overlooked phenomenon when considering groups (i.e. families) in transmission dynamics. While social distancing decreases contact with members of society, it of course increases your contacts with group (i.e. family) members. This small and obvious fact has surprisingly profound implications on disease transmission dynamics. Study after study demonstrates that even if there is only a little bit of connection between groups (i.e. social dinners, playdates/playgrounds, etc.), the epidemic trajectory isn’t much different than if there was no measure in place. The same underlying fundamentals of disease transmission apply, and the result is that the community is left with all of the social and economic disruption but very little public health benefit. You should perceive your entire family to function as a single individual unit; if one person puts themselves at risk, everyone in the unit is at risk. Seemingly small social chains get large and complex with alarming speed. If your son visits his girlfriend, and you later sneak over for coffee with a neighbor, your neighbor is now connected to the infected office worker that your son’s girlfriend’s mother shook hands with. This sounds silly, it’s not. This is not a joke or a hypothetical. We as epidemiologists see it borne out in the data time and time again and no one listens. Conversely, any break in that chain breaks disease transmission along that chain.

In contrast to hand-washing and other personal measures, social distancing measures are not about individuals, they are about societies working in unison. These measures also take a long time to see the results. It is hard (even for me) to conceptualize how ‘one quick little get together’ can undermine the entire framework of a public health intervention, but it does. I promise you it does. I promise. I promise. I promise. You can’t cheat it. People are already itching to cheat on the social distancing precautions just a “little”- a playdate, a haircut, or picking up a needless item at the store, etc. From a transmission dynamics standpoint, this very quickly recreates a highly connected social network that undermines all of the work the community has done so far.

Until we get a viable vaccine this unprecedented outbreak will not be overcome in grand, sweeping gesture, rather only by the collection of individual choices our community makes in the coming months. This virus is unforgiving to unwise choices. My goal in writing this is to prevent communities from getting ‘sucker-punched’ by what the epidemiological community knows will happen in the coming weeks. It will be easy to be drawn to the idea that what we are doing isn’t working and become paralyzed by fear, or to ‘cheat’ a little bit in the coming weeks. By knowing what to expect, and knowing the importance of maintaining these measures, my hope is to encourage continued community spirit, strategizing, and action to persevere in this time of uncertainty.

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Flu Vaccine

Residents who have managed to buy the flu vaccine are to please call Sister Joy at Resthaven who will arrange for a Nursing Sister to come to their home to administer the injection.

The Randjes supply of the flu vaccine has not yet been approved and we believe that the Government may have seconded all available vaccines and we may therefore not get our big supply at all.

If you can get a flu vaccine please do so and call Sister Joy to organise the administering thereof.

Randjerians you are not alone - even though you are not seeing our team members right now - we are with you and we are constantly thinking about how to keep you all safe. This will pass and we want all of you to be there when it does.

Warm regards

Gail and the Team

