Already, even with the small numbers of infections in South Africa, the SARS-CoV-2 virus is placing huge strain on the healthcare system in South Africa.

It is important for doctors to present the correct information to their staff and patients and most important that patient in need are not abandoned or turned away when seeking help, advice and information.

Get Your Practice Ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Before Patients Arrive
- Prepare the clinic / rooms.
- Know which of your patients are at higher risk of adverse outcomes from COVID-19.
- Retain a high degree of suspicion that any patient could be COVID-19 positive
- Consider and plan for providing more telemedicine appointments – telephone calls, text messages and videocalls
- Know how to contact the NICD and your provincial health coordinator
- Identify several potential suppliers for stocks - assess and restock supplies now and on a regular schedule.

Communicate with patients
- Ask patients about symptoms during reminder calls
- Consider rescheduling non-urgent appointments.
- Post signs at entrances and in waiting areas about prevention actions, options to call by phone and communicate via telemedicine options

Prepare the waiting area and patient rooms.
- Provide supplies—tissues, alcohol-based hand rub, soap at sinks, and rubbish bins.
- Place chairs 1-2 metres apart, when possible.
- Use barriers (like screens), if possible.
- If your office has toys, reading materials, or other communal objects, remove them or clean them regularly.

When Patients Arrive
- Place staff at the entrance to ask patients about their symptoms
- Provide symptomatic patients with tissues or facemasks to cover mouth and nose.
- Only patients should enter the practice - limit accompanying people and family members

Separate sick patients with symptoms.
- Allow patients to wait outside or in the car if they are medically able.
- Create separate spaces in waiting areas for sick and well patients.
- Place sick patients in a private room as quickly as possible.

After Patients are Assessed
- After patients leave, clean frequently touched surfaces using appropriate disinfectants (alcohol 70% or 0.1% bleach) -counters, beds, seating.
- Provide at-home care instructions to patients with respiratory symptoms. Consider telehealth options for follow up.
- Notify your provincial health representative and the NICD of patients with COVID-19 symptoms.

Train and prepare your staff now
- Ensure that clinical staff know the right ways to put on, use, and take off PPE safely.
- Recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 — fever, cough, shortness of breath.
- Implement procedures to quickly triage and separate sick patients.
- Emphasize hand hygiene and cough etiquette for everyone.
- Ask staff to stay home if they are sick.
- Send staff home if they develop symptoms while at work.

IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS:

NICD PATIENT HOTLINE: 0800 029 999
PATIENT WHATSAPP COVID-19 CONNECT: 0600 123456
NICD CLINICIANS HOTLINES: 082 883 9920 OR 066 562 4021 OR 0800 11 1131

“Disclaimer drawn up based on the best available evidence at the time, but may be subject to change.”