



ZiMA STATEMENT ON THE COVID-19

24 MARCH 2020

Preamble

The Zimbabwe Medical Association would like to inform the nation that the COVID-19 is upon us. It is imperative that we set aside political, ethnic and racial prejudices and collaborate to ensure that we conquer this pandemic.

a) To the Government:

The profession applauds the efforts being exerted by government to ensure that the country effectively tackles this pandemic. However, more needs to be done to ensure no loss of lives

- ✚ Availing of PPE: There is need for the government to immediately ensure that Personal Protective clothing (PPE) is availed to all frontline personnel.
- ✚ Availability of drugs: Experiences in other countries indicate that Chloroquine and Lopinavir are essential drugs in the treatment of the disease. Government needs to ensure that these drugs are availed to all designated COVID-19 care centres. During this difficult period it might be difficult to import these drugs. The profession calls on government to urgently licence local manufacturers to produce these drugs for the local market (**VARICHEM, CAPS , DATLABS need to be capacitated to enable them to produce these drugs locally**)
There is also need to ensure that Oxygen is readily available at all designated care centres
- ✚ Designated Care centres: We recommend that either Parirenyatwa Hospital or Harare Hospital in Harare and either UBH or Mpilo Hospitals be designated COVID-19 Care Centres. It is our considered opinion that these centres need minimal refurbishment to ensure that basic ICU equipment is functional. The other central hospitals to remain open for other medical emergencies which are not COVID-19 related.
- ✚ Make public places Safe: There is need for government to ensure that there is minimal movement, non-essential public spaces closed and all borders sealed for visitors. There is need for a minimum 14 day lockdown. **This recommendation ought to be implemented sooner rather than later.**
- ✚ Doctors are willing to help all provided appropriate Protective personnel Equipment is availed and appropriate support i.e food , communication rest room etc..are provided as they will also be quarantined once they get into contact with patients

b) To the Corporate World

- ✚ Never before has corporate responsibility been need to safeguard humanity. Our recommendation is the establishment of a Corporate Social Responsibility Committee with ZiMA that will determine how and where to channel resources to clinically and appropriately respond to the needs of COVID-19 patients and medical personnel.
- ✚ We recommend considering a shut down and running on skeleton staff for essential services.
- ✚ Those that produce alcohol and ethanol products are urged to immediately mass produce hand sanitizers for mass distribution in every suburb at cost recovery basis.
- ✚ The pandemic offers opportunities for local corporates to produce goods to substitute imports

c) To the private health funders and medical Aid societies

- ✚ None of us has ever experienced such a pandemic. We immediately call for health insurers to urgently consider practice of tele-medicine.
 - ✚ We recommend that funders ensure adequate personnel to authorise procedures during these trying times.
- d) **To health facilities**
- ✚ PRECAUTION, PRECAUTION, PRECAUTION
 - ✚ Rationalization of available equipment to COVID response Medical facilities e.g lending key equipment such as ventilators, drip stands and oxygen tanks to designated COVID -19 facilities.
 - ✚ Put in place SOPs for COVID-19 risk assessment.
- e) **To health practitioners**
- ✚ Healthcare workers are encouraged to stay safe by ensuring that they assess risk factors before treating patients or entering into facilities
 - ✚ Ensure that there is adequate PPE in both private practices
 - ✚ Continue to give routine care safely in order to preserve lives for those with pre-existing conditions.
 - ✚ Protect yourselves and your immediate family members
 - ✚ The profession needs to work on case management protocols
 - ✚ There is need to mitigate further spread by stopping all elective cases and discharging non critical patients.
- f) **To the general public**
- ✚ **PRECAUTION, PRECAUTION, PRECAUTION:** We urge the public to take COVID-19 threat extremely seriously before it is too late.
 - ✚ Those with immuno-suppression, HIV, Cancer, Diabetes, Hypertension, Arthritis, who have been using Ibuprofen, Cardio vascular conditions etc and those above the age of 50 are advised to immediately go into self-isolation.
 - ✚ Mental health and health anxiety
 - Get correct information from authentic sources
 - avoid social media overload
 - Get therapy for worming mental disorders
 - ✚ Avoid unnecessary travel
 - ✚ Wash hands with soap under clean running water often
 - ✚ Avoid congregating as much as possible.
 - ✚ Stay at home until you need hospitalization.



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