

Virtual Pre-Conference

# Continuity of HIV Care in the Presence of COVID-19

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## Optimising ART Adherence within Disrupted Health Systems



# HIV and SARS-CoV-2 in South Africa



## Disrupting factors:

- SARS-CoV-2 cases: how many?

Mitigating and aggravating factors for South(ern) Africa.

- Lock down:

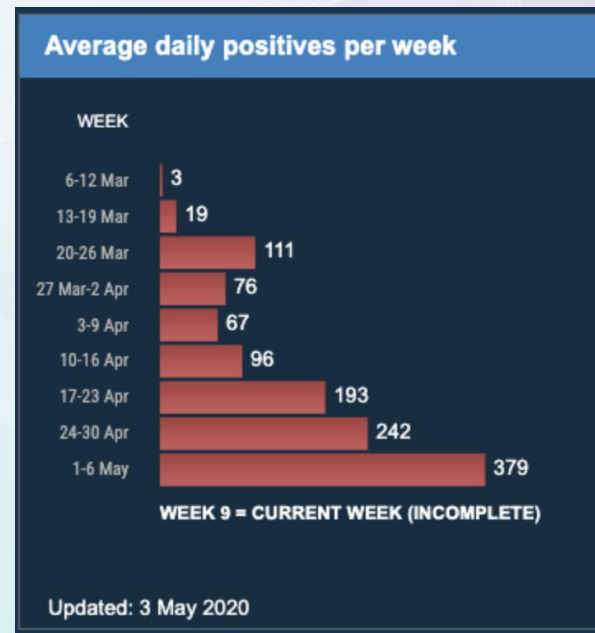
Many African health care systems are already under strain.

Impact on individuals already struggling with poverty.

# HIV and SARS-CoV-2 in South Africa

South Africa still in early part of COVID epidemic:  
30<sup>th</sup> April 5647 cases, and 103 deaths.

Hard lock down  
since 27<sup>th</sup> March.  
Eased slightly  
1<sup>st</sup> May...



## The 5 levels of lockdown

Here's what life will look like under each of South Africa's five levels of Covid-19 restrictions.



### Level 5: life under lockdown



**Level 5 is the hard lockdown South Africa has come to know:**  
Only essentials may be bought, and only essentials may be made.

### Level 4: essentials, and a little bit extra



You'll be able to buy even non-essential stuff from stores already open to sell food – but not booze.



Postal delivery will resume.



E-hailing and taxis will be allowed at any time, but with limits on how many passengers each may carry.



**Industries to reopen include:**  
agriculture (including wine-making), open-cast mining, and all financial and professional services.

### Level 3: takeaways, booze, and clothes



Some domestic air travel will return, but with limited flights per day – and authorisation required to travel.



You'll be able to buy takeaway food and order from Uber Eats, and Mr D.

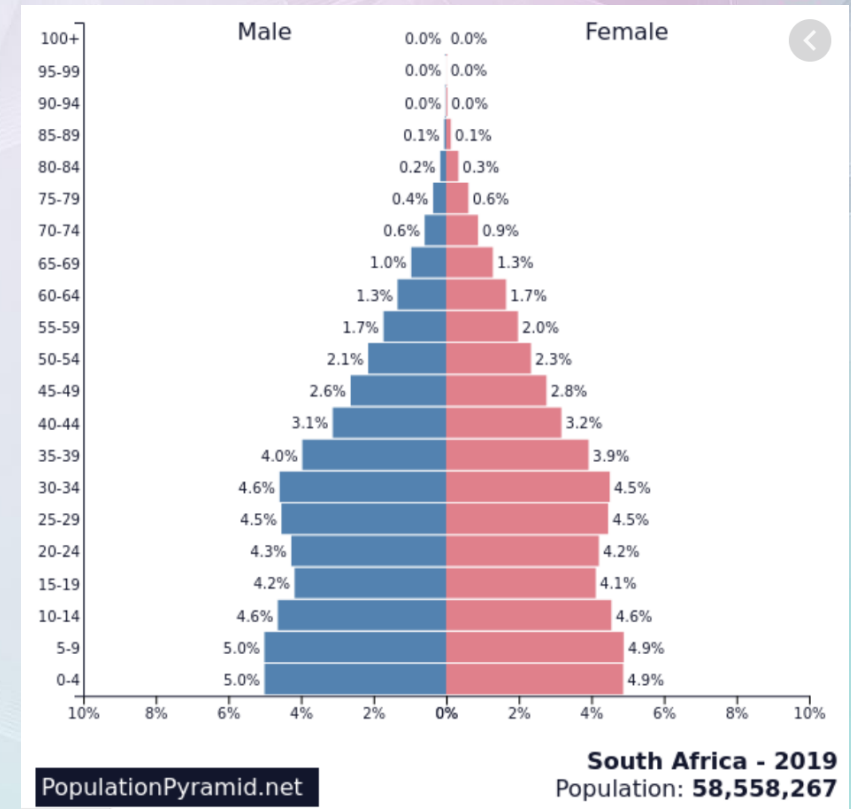


# Impact of SARS-CoV-2 cases



## Mitigating factors

- 5.3% of our population is over 65 years of age.
- ?HLA types
- ? cross-protective immunity (repeated infections with other coronavirus species)
- We have had time to prepare...



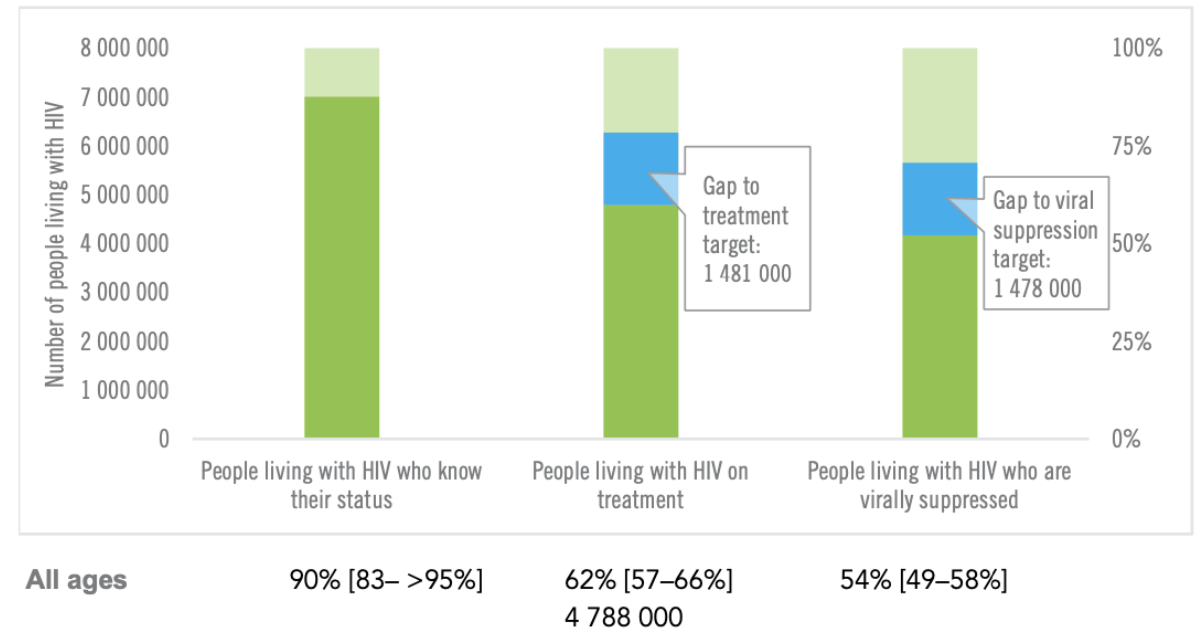
# Impact of SARS-CoV-2 cases



## Aggravating factors

- 48% of those with HIV are not virally suppressed.
- TB endemic – current and previous lung disease
- Obesity (31%)
- DM (6-12%)
- HPT (60% >60 years)

## HIV TESTING AND TREATMENT CASCADE



# Impact of SARS-CoV-2 cases



## Deaths under 40 years

Facility	Age	Sex	Co-morbidity
Mediclinic Morningside	24	M	HT, DM, CRF
Groote Schuur Hospital	30	M	DM
Tygerberg Hospital	41	M	HIV, VL suppressed

NICD  
COVID-19  
Hospital Sentinel Surveillance  
Report Number 4 29 April 2020



# Impact of SARS-CoV-2 cases

- Communities are crowded,  
so physical spacing is difficult.  
**Peak of epidemic still to come.**



# Impact of lockdown – on health care system



## Supply of ART is under threat:

- Clinics are limiting numbers leading to crowding outside.
- Worsening of waiting time.

“I have received 2 calls from patients who take their medication @Guguletu ,they are complaining about the long ques as they are old to stand for the whole day .They want to find out if is there maybe fieldworkers who can deliver their medication door to door and another patient is saying she is running out of medication she took her last pill today .They were shouting me.”



# Impact of lockdown – on health care system



- Chain of supply disrupted – restricted international and local transport; no delivery. Reliance on supply from India and China.
- Current shortage of efavirenz-based ART.
- No delivery of PrEP – recent service, seems to be considered non-essential (600 new HIV cases per day).

# Impact of lockdown – on health care system



## **Are a number of solutions:**

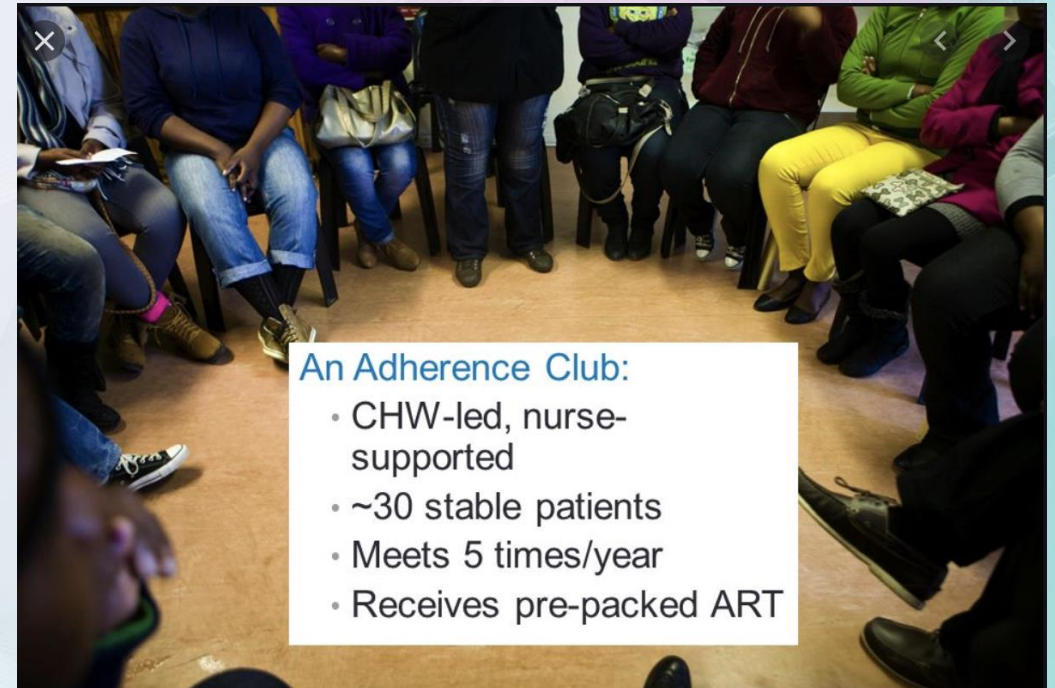
- Requires a change in thinking; move stable people out of the system.
- New guidelines were released end of 2019 (switch from EFV-to DTG-based ART... system already in the midst of change.

# Impact of lockdown – on health care system



## Western Cape plan:

- Push for testing and initiation...
- Increase ART supply given – 4 to 6 months if stable.
- Differentiated care - allowing others to dispense medications (adapt adherence clubs; family and friends to collect)





# Impact of lockdown – on health care system



## Other options:

- Increase “life-span” of prescriptions
- ?alternative forms of delivery
- Does this open up clinics for those who really need to be there?
- Are we going to go back to the way it was before?



# Impact of lockdown – what we hope for...



- Covid19 should not impact those with HIV as long as they are not immune suppressed or do not have co-morbidities.

“For us, people living with HIV, we are relying on our ARV medications to be able to stay healthy. Compared with the general population, people with compromised immunity are at higher risk of contracting the new coronavirus and developing more serious COVID-19 illness or dying. However, on ARVs and with a suppressed viral load and higher CD4 count, **people living with HIV do not all have compromised immune systems and are at no greater risk.**”

<https://www.gnpplus.net/lessons-learnt-from-the-hiv-response-for-covid-19-building-community-resilience/>

# Impact of lockdown – on individual health



## **Reduced socio-economic circumstances:**

- Loss of jobs, food insecurity already at 62% in Gugulethu.
- Domestic workers and gardeners only allowed back level 2.
- Stealing of food parcels, robbing of food trucks seen daily.

“Although physical distancing slows the transmission of the virus, it exacts a heavy toll on the informal economic and casual labour sector.” “Most of Africa’s poorest citizens will ignore quarantine directives and continue to engage in communal activities to earn incomes for their families.” Mehtar et al, The Lancet, 2020.



# Impact of lockdown – on individual health



## **Increase in gender-based violence.**

”Social Development Minister Lindiwe Zulu said the number of gender-based violence cases has been increasing. She said the government is not moving swiftly enough to help women get out of abusive situations.”

# Impact of lockdown – on individual health



## **Lack of privacy:**

- Living in tight spaces, fear of stigma.
- Non-disclosure

## **Fear of COVID-19**

- Police road blocks – thousands of arrests in SA
- Restriction in movement – people in wrong province
- Not attending their clinics

# Impact of lockdown – on individual health



## Change in dosing patterns:

- Habits are altered.
- Simpler life can allow improvement in adherence: “Life is calm, I feel better”. Ease to dose as not going out to work.
- Can complicate matters: oversleeping, lack of routine.



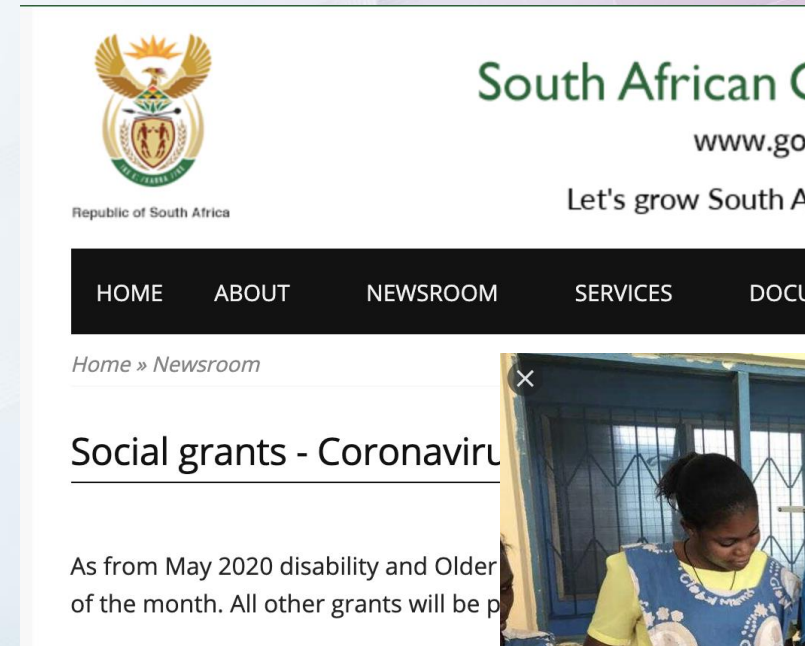
# Impact of lockdown – on individual health

Problems are magnified in this time of stress.

## Any solutions?

Government:

- Offer of a COVID-19 stipend (R350 = \$20)
- Food parcels
- Increase employment opportunities where possible



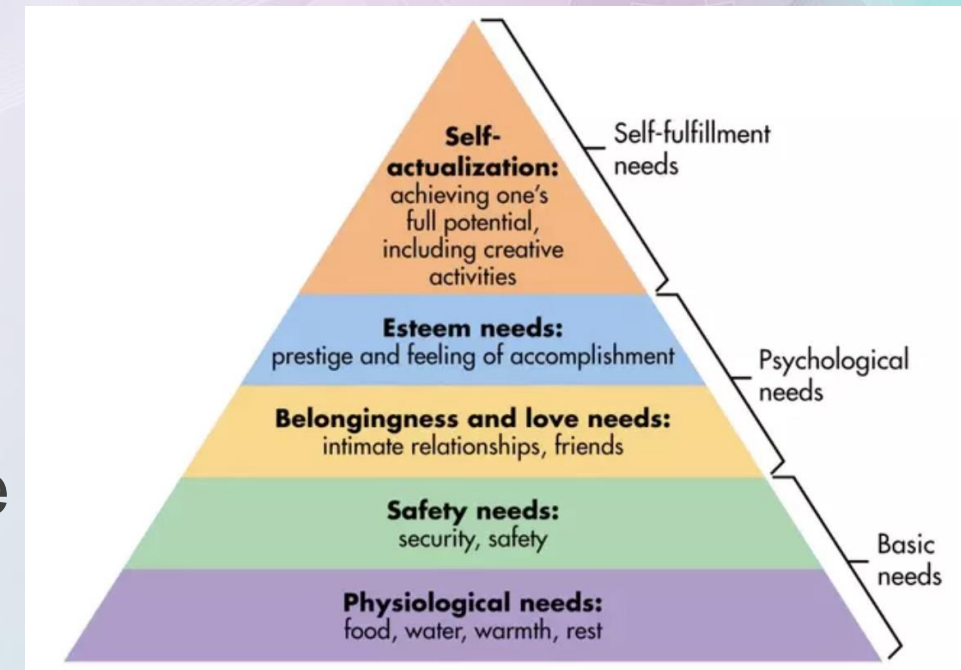
# Impact of lockdown – on individual health



## Any solutions?

Health care system:

- Encourage to collect ART (offer lifts)
- Essential to dose correctly and maintain viral suppression
- Educate about COVID-19 – staying safe while travelling, and at clinic. Masks, distancing and hygiene.



# Acknowledgements

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