

We've done well, but long road lies ahead

COVID-19 has rewritten medical cases, careers, world events and business risks. This is far worse on any scale than the current generation, from Baby Boomers to Generation Z, has witnessed and experienced in the past 100 years.

Several countries have taken various initiatives and South Africa, after the terrible mishap around antiretrovirals, is taking its place in the world as a leader in helping humanity find better medical solutions to the crisis.

South African medicine was placed on the global stage by brothers, doctors Marius and Chris Barnard, who respectively harvested and transplanted a human heart. This set a world precedent, beating their overseas counterparts by only a few hours.

The South African response to the Covid-19 outbreak was ably handled by President Cyril Ramaphosa, who initiated the lockdown, and now with updates by Minister of Health Dr Zweli Mkhize.

Mkhize has assembled a team of more than 40 individuals who have guided South Africa and its neighbours in handling the pandemic.

Among the many in the team, special mention needs to be given to Professor Salim Abdool Karim and his wife, Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim. The spadework has been exceptional.

What is amazing is the effort and thinking put into creating the many scenarios, as well as profiles and possible worse-case scenarios, in order to give the government various options. In handling an outbreak, South Africa opted for Red, as opposed to Orange, in the Disease Outbreak Response Condition scale model. Sadly, Singapore, which went from yellow to orange, is floundering, with almost 300 new infections daily.

The presentation by Abdool Karim was a brilliant analysis. This was not about his intelligence, but rather communicating an important message: KwaZulu-Natal is high-risk territory.

Thank you Mkhize, professors and the team. Great challenges lie ahead.

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