

Getting the message out there

By  [Nicci Botha](#)

6 Jul 2020

Much of the huge amount of information around the Covid-19, how it spreads and what people can do to help stop the spread is in English, so Dr Mathobela Matjekane, chief executive, Clinimed, has started a campaign to create content and videos around the virus in as many of the country's official languages as possible.



Dr Mathobela Matjekane, chief executive, Clinimed

■ ***Set the scene. What is a typical work day like under lockdown?***

My day begins the day before. I'm a mother and wife, so work life balance requires me to set the tone before I go to bed. I usually get up around 7am and fit in a 30 to 45 minute workout. I believe in staying active and challenging the body and mind. I'll take a shower, grab breakfast and then head to one of the practices depending on where I should be stationed based on appointments. I have a quick check in with my staff and set the day. We start our with our appointments/consultations. My day would end around 18.00 to 18.30pm after seeing at least 40 patients a day.

■ ***What was your initial response to the crisis/lockdown and has your experience of it?***

My initial response was to ease panic amongst the staff, especially supportive staff who don't necessarily have medical experience like doctors and nurses would. We needed to understand the disease extensively, seek more information and add on top of what our government had communicated. This helped us set up preventive and protection measures for staff, patients and our families. Understanding the disease was our top priority. It gave us the opportunity to see whether we were prepared and had the capacity not only as a healthcare practice but as a business too. We had to adapt to changes and accept the new normal which was a bit overwhelming at first but we had to emphasise that its for importance.

■ ***Tell us about the challenges and opportunities***

The challenges were realising that the pandemic has arrived in South Africa. My anxiety automatically thought of our home affairs with regards to the standards of living, service delivery, education, health, poverty and unemployment. I immediately thought we are going to have to buckle up. Having to explain the disease process to our patients on a daily basis and realising that the amount of information was sometimes overwhelming for them. Diagnosing patients regularly and realising that there is no cure, vaccine and literally praying that their immune system will survive the virus. Daily dealing with patients who are scared and anxious about their future and careers while having to deal with their health. Opportunity wise, the

pandemic gave us a platform where we started understanding that we as medical professionals have a lot of information that we needed to decode for our patients. We started putting ourselves in the shoes of our mothers and aunts who were located in the deep rural Eastern Cape, Khayelitsha, and other communities where English is not well understood, who were watching from a fence wondering what is this Covid -19 all about. A big urge came that we should get information to them in the languages they understand so they could protect themselves.

■ ***The world has really turned to creativity and innovation during this time. How are you seeing this play out in your sphere?***

Moreover, it is interesting to see the healthcare profession moving into digitalisation and use of advanced telecommunication platforms to communicate any new developments for wider reach. This is not something we are necessarily used to outside of our consultation rooms and laboratory rooms. Technology has been quite helpful in this instance.

■ ***What are you busy working on?***

We are currently collaborating with other entities to try and decode Covid-19 and any other medical diseases and make sure our communities are able to make informed decisions about their health. We've come up with medical care platform tailored for our patients by our doctors who understand what we need. We are trying to secure funding to get it out there.

■ ***What trends you've seen emerge as a result of the crisis?***

The pandemic has continued to expose the different socio-economic factors in our society. We are communicating digitally but there are far greater communities without access to basic services, let alone the internet. We are seeing a lot of live Instagram conversation amongst the healthcare profession but how far is the reach?

■ ***What is your key message for fighting the virus?***

We must continue social distancing as much as we can and even when the levels are reduced that doesn't mean that the virus has disappeared its still living amongst us and we must all act and be responsible individuals and protect our families and people around us. We must continue to boost our immune systems so that should we contract the virus it is able to fight Covid-19, wash our hands regularly, stay home if there's no need for you to be outside or socialising. Try and minimise the time you spend reading or watching news about the virus as it may cause panic and anxiety.

■ ***How do you see the virus changing life as we know it?***

As long there is no vaccine we will have to do things differently up till there is a way everybody can be protected and safe and have some immunity for all. I foresee us living around it as opposed to having life completely on pause. Unfortunately we see that the economy activity has to be considered.

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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