14 July 2021

Dear Valued members

**IMPACT OF VIOLENT PROTESTS ON HEALTH SERVICES**

We received a communication from the Department of Health advising of the impact of the current violent protests on health services and possible disruptions and delays with the vaccination roll out programme in South Africa.

A copy of the communication is posted below:

**From the Department of Health**

**Pretoria:** The Department of Health South Africa today confirms that the national vaccination programme is continuing across most provinces, with vaccines being safely distributed to operational sites.

However, the recent violent protests have impacted the vaccination rollout and also disrupted access to essential healthcare services including collection of chronic medication by TB, HIV, Diabetes and other patients in some districts and areas in both KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng.

Government and the private sector's priority is to protect lives, and prevent harm to staff, patients and the medical supplies and property that form part of the vaccination programme. Consequently, Government and the private sector are adopting a precautionary principle, and will be temporarily closing some vaccination sites which have been damaged, or which may be at risk.

Anyone who had been scheduled to be vaccinated at sites in districts or areas that are affected by the unrest are advised to defer their vaccination. The Electronic Vaccine Data System (EVDS) will automatically reschedule appointments for those unable to attend; it is programmed to reschedule up to two missed appointments.

If it is not clear whether an area has been affected, the public is advised to contact the vaccination site to which they have been scheduled before proceeding to the site for the administration of vaccines. The Department will publicise a list of affected areas and sites as soon as it is available.

The Department is also aware that some pharmacies and medical centres have been looted, and that stock has been stolen. The public is warned not to buy any medicines offered for sale by anyone other than registered medical practitioners, pharmacies or hospitals, and to report any attempted sale to the SAPS immediately.

Stolen or improperly dispensed medicines are extremely dangerous as they may not have been stored properly, may be contaminated, or may cause dangerous side effects.

The Department is working closely with other departments in the security cluster and private sector to ensure that access to healthcare services and operations at vaccination sites are restored.

All people who are eligible and scheduled to vaccinate in the affected areas, are urged to call COVID-19 Call Centre on 0800 029 999 or make use of the various self-help channels:

- vaccine.enroll.health.gov.za;
- WhatsApp 0600 123 56 or
- Dial *134*832# and reply to the messages.

We would appreciate it if you could communicate these protocols to any staff who may be affected.