

# Living with COVID19 as the Unfolding Reality of the New Normal



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I am sharing my opinion about the future of educating the public and health care professionals about COVID-19 in the near future. Specifically, this thinking is centered around the current nursing students and those who will be trained in the department of Nursing at UNIZULU in the recent future about how they can best be prepared to care for a patient who is infected with COVID-19. Without being one-sided one has also to think about how to capacitate the professional nurses, staff nurses, auxiliary nurses, home-based carers, communities as well as the health care workers in the region of KZN in particular and elsewhere in general. Without overlooking the role of other sciences in the picture such as microbiology, chemistry just naming a few. All these categories of human species have felt the heatwave of COVID-19 with the increasing strength and severity of infections in one hand and the different Lockdown levels on the other.

Concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, it is an acceptable expectation that the Dept. of Nursing Science may engage the “Unizulu Community” through seminars, various modes of teaching, providing personal and group support as well providing appropriate guidance on how best to fight COVID-19 pandemic. The plea is that the Department of Nursing may venture on how to socially respond to the needs and challenges of the “University Community” and the “Surrounding Rural Communities”. Probably, a joint venture with the University Campus Clinic the department of nursing could form a solid rock that can strike COVID-19 to its knees. Besides the thought of how COVID-19 can be eradicated at UNIZULU and the surrounding communities on one side. The reality is that there is a need to establish how things should be done differently if COVID-19 is to be defeated.

Whilst the Nursing Department may position Unizulu at a visible pedestal as a Higher Education Institution through short causes on COVID-19 which can be offered to both the “Internal-Unizulu-Community”, the “External-Rural-Communities” as well as surrounding “Surrounding-Commercial-Industries” in the King Cetshwayo District. The questions that come to mind at this stage are (i) Can the Dept. of Nursing manage to engage this battle alone? (ii) Can the expertise of different faculties in the Faculty of Science and Agriculture be unified to achieve this which is not just a ‘big’ but ‘an import’ goal? (iii) Where and how do we begin the journey?

As a nurse and researcher I don't feel comfortable to hold back when the health sector that I have served "**directly**" for more than 15 years as a clinician; and now serving it "**indirectly**" as an educator is going through such malice and strain in service provision in the midst of COVID-19. All the South African and international Health Care clinicians who are currently working in SA particularly the Nurses and the Citizens of SA Nation are truly grateful for the life-saving emergency care rendered to all COVID-19 patients and contacts. **Well done!** This appreciation goes out to every Health Worker and Clinician in SA despite the unforeseen worst that might be ahead of the country.

Being at the forefront in the fight with COVID-19 is the current worse for these people who go to their various places of work day after day without any assurance that will come home without contracting the virus, i.e. COVID-19. To be at the forefront of fighting the plague of COVID-19 is not as simple as one might think. If I put myself in their shoes I realize that these colleagues are standing merely on two factors namely:

1. self-acknowledgment of vast experience in health provision and
2. sound education & training.

It is as though they say "... *if I don't go to help the COVID-19 patients with all the weapons and expertise then who can?*" in one hand. Yet, on the other hand, their conscious, soul, and spirit are probably wrapped on extreme *moral obligation and feelings of and duty-bound to care for their fellow South Africans*. This is my personal view that going to work in health care settings is no longer business as usual as they are at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19. But, they make a conscious decision as they get up every day to go to their places of employment whether it is for the execution of nursing care to the sick, screening and or testing communities, the common denominator is love that propels them even if they go there just to lay-out the last offices. Indeed, they wear their **faces, hands, and hearts** as they would normally do whilst hiding fear and despair. My perception is that they wake up each day with a living conscious that confide the Oath and Pledge of service that they once bonded their soul spirit and body on caring for their patients in one hand. Whilst on the other they are drawn by the knowledge, expertise, and experience from what they view as the solid foundation that was laid by the Nursing Education and Training. Now they do not see this scourge as the payback time but as one of the time for which the Nursing Oath and Pledge were taken for.

I am mindful that I am not them! Who is them? I mean the nurses who are in the frontline of COVID-19, but I am putting myself in their shoes. The journey towards curbing the scourge of COVID-19 is not only still too long but also is a blurry one with a lot of unanswered questions. Hence all the mathematical expressions with no definite answers are found all over. The way to go is to share what we know, to love best that we can, and to care sincerely as truthful as we can. This is a call to share and transfer of knowledge, skill, or the know-how across human species and through all fronts. I mean sharing between the expert to another, expert to a general, indigenous to the scientific view, culture to religious and or spiritual connotations. As the human race, we are one at the end of all the differences and demarcation that we create to segregate us.

### ***So what could be a desirable way forward in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic?***

As clinicians are doing all that which is humanly possible, acting on scientific reports and discoveries the SA citizens are only grateful to the service they are receiving but are also putting their trust in the supernatural intervention of God, the creator of all universes. However, the

essential thought in this opinion paper is about the need for a collaborated force to fight COVID-19. Whilst the nursing profession takes a visible stance on how to engage the nursing students with management modalities against COVID19 which is a new health issue to address especially in the pre-license nursing program in one hand. Yet, on the other wishing to reach out to its internal and external communities such responsibility becomes overwhelming. Not only because the current theoretical knowledge and understanding of the underpinning pathological mechanisms and etiology of COVID-19 are not yet well captured in this emergency state which is simply influenced and shaped by clinical features and presentation of the infected person. But this is because the scourge of COVID-19 is too wide and deep requiring a multifaceted and multistage approach.

Collective action towards planning and execution of teaching and learning against COVID-19 is thus advocated in order to combat the COVID-19 pandemic which is proposed in this piece. It means that we need to be determined, prepared, and ready from the onset on how to deal with the disease in the near or recent future. Health Sciences and related Sciences theorists should start theorizing about how the COVID-19 must at least be restricted if it cannot be extinct. This speculation will require the knowledge on how the concept of COVID-19 should be unpacked (i) **in the practice of nursing** (ii) because of human life, i.e. of an *individual or a person*, (iii) *the environmental space or health setting*, as well as (iv) conceptualization *of health* with or without COVID-19. It's from this backdrop that this brainstorming is exposed.

The social context in its self is multifaceted so as the required inventions. They should be transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary while contained enough to address distinct and unique health issues from social, health, human, and natural sciences. Such integration is the answer to address the scourge of COVID-19. The time is now to explore how the theories from different disciplines and schools of thought can jointly arrest the scourge of COVID-19. The question is how are we going sustain embracing the new normal of social distancing, frequent washing of hands, sanitizing hand and surfaces, wearing of masks in the public spaces in one hand; and the dying economy due to movement restrictions on the other. If we put our minds together we can be surprised by the positive results that we can come out with.

**OUR UNIZULU**

**YOUR UNIZULU**

**MY UNIZULU**

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