



## COV19 Doctors on Call: Coronavirus Helpline Program

### Background

Given the state of community spread in South Africa, our country is entering a dangerous phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. Given the structural weaknesses in our health system, our patients, nurses and doctors are at real risk of exposure and infection. Covid-19 epidemic threatens our entire health system, social infrastructure and national economy. The NICD has implemented strict guidelines for primary healthcare workers to manage the frontline of exposure. These guidelines include a defined diagnostic protocol, a clinical management algorithm and reporting framework.

The NICD has also recommended that concerned members of public contact their doctors first, rather than present at their surgeries, clinics or emergency rooms, in order to prevent further spread of the virus and infect frontline healthcare workers, which will further disable the healthcare system. Many people, particularly the uninsured, unemployed and vulnerable groups, don't have direct access to call a doctor, hence they are at greater risk. This program has been designed to help them.

### Doctors on Call

The KwaZulu-Natal Doctors Healthcare Coalition (KZNDHC), supported by Usizo Advisory Solutions and Vula, has piloted a not-for-profit program called 'Covid-19 Doctors on Call'. This program is open to all doctors, from across the country.

Doctors on Call is a program which offers a Covid-19 helpline, operating during the hours of 8am-5pm (Monday-Friday), manned by our dedicated community of over 450 doctors. Administered by a local call centre, all calls are received by a trained call centre agent, screened and then routed to a doctor-on-call, for advice related to Covid-19. Callers only pay for the price of the normal call and not the discussion with the doctor.

The doctor network are training according to the national guidelines, standard operating processes and provide advice according to the NICD guidelines. All calls are documented and reported on using the Vula app. The helpline provides information only and refers callers to the appropriate channels if further intervention or testing is required. The number is 0087 0550 234.

### Call to Action

Defeating this epidemic will require unprecedented support from all stakeholders in South Africa, both public and private. This support demonstrates good corporate citizenship and contributes towards protecting our employees, customers and the sustainability of business, in our country.

The Covid-19 Doctors on Call program is a doctor-led, philanthropic, independent response to one of the greatest crisis of our times. It calls for us to join together and overcome any fragmentation that may exist. We need to work together as one.

Your support for this program could help flatten the curve, save our health system from being overwhelmed, protect our economy and save lives.