



United we stand

Welcome to PhysioBiz, brought to you by the South African Society of Physiotherapy!

Time to buckle down and just. do. it.

In years to come, PhD theses will be written about the time we're living through right now. Should South Africa have locked down so soon, or at all? What did Kerala State, in India, do right? What factors affected the mortality in Sweden versus Italy? There will be no end of post mortems and squabbles over facts and data and interpretations. Right now, it doesn't really matter all that much. We are in the heart of the storm. When the wind is raging and the hail smashing into your face, you can't afford to pause for a debate on the best jacket to wear – you need to do the very best you can to make it through and reach shelter.

Many of our patients are people we've come to know well; we know that you care about health, and we're sure you care about the wellbeing of your country. So now, we'd like to call on you to do the best you can for yourselves, but more importantly, for everyone around you.

Because that's the biggest message from this pandemic:

We are our communities.

I am because we are.

No man is an island, entire of himself.

Upon the conduct of each, depends the fate of all.

I am my brother's keeper.

The response to this pandemic turns out to be **ubuntu**: what you decide to do affects everyone else around you. Every individual cannot escape the fact that their actions do much to determine the course of the virus: will it continue to spread wildly? How many will die? How many will suffer long-term consequences? How many will need extensive rehabilitation? How will all of these outcomes affect our economy... our social resilience... and our mental health?

Each of us has a part to play.

As the South African Society of Physiotherapy, we are supporting our members as they plunge into the fight of their lives: physiotherapy treatment is at the very core of COVID-19 treatment. Physiotherapists in full personal protective equipment (PPE) are

already at work in wards and ICU's around the country, optimising cardiopulmonary function, helping desperately virus-fatigued people to move, sit and stand, doing passive exercise so that they won't decondition so drastically that their road to recovery will be much longer. They are helping people who have left hospital ease back into function, and resume the activities of normal daily life. They are risking themselves in an exhausting but necessary job.

If you are in a position where you can influence others, if you're an employer, a teacher, a community leader, you can use your influence and role to help others understand the way this virus spreads and how they can protect themselves and others. If you can, you can help others: donations that will go towards providing food for the hungry, PPE for healthcare professionals, even just a bag of apples in your car that you can hand out on your way to work.

Individual citizens have undoubtedly the most crucial role: to wear masks in public places, to keep their distance, standing two metres away from others, to sanitise and wash their hands, to ensure safe workplaces, transport and shops.

An even more difficult role: to demand that others do likewise. If you are shy about speaking up, remember that you're not doing so for *you*: you're doing it for your loved ones, and the unknown loved ones of those around you, even – and perhaps especially – those of the person whose mask is serving as a chin-warmer or who is hanging over someone else's shoulder in a queue, or who shuts the window in a taxi or other place where ventilation is essential.

And finally, the really, really tough job: to keep on staying at home, to not go out and see your precious grandchildren, your bestie, your mom and dad. The sacrifices we are all making are very, very hard. But you are protecting every person you love, and every person they love, and everyone loved by the people they love, on and on and on in ever-widening ripples that embrace the whole of our society.

I am because we are.

Love one another.

Because we are one.

And we must stand united against this pandemic.