

leading to faster spread to other age groups. Current prevention efforts are known to be effective against this variant but their inconsistent use is creating opportunities for the virus to spread even faster.

2. The rapidity of the growth in the epidemic is placing hospitals under immense strain in the Eastern Cape, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. Notwithstanding some of the data limitations, the DATCOV data indicate that in these provinces the public and private hospitals are quickly reaching capacity, reducing their capability to treat all other medical emergencies or to admit more Covid-19 patients.
3. Travel from South Africa may be severely impacted as countries try to protect themselves from an introduction of this new variant. South Africa has a responsibility to try to limit the spread of this variant to other countries.

Recommendations

1. Alert Level be increased to Level 2 to highlight the need for more concerted action on prevention, both from the public and the government. As reported, cases have exceeded 10,000 cases per day and are continuing to rise and substantial numbers of healthcare workers have been infected or exposed reducing the available healthcare capacity, there is a strong rationale for Level 2.
2. The restrictions applicable to Level 2 should be implemented as soon as possible. Two of the Level 1 restrictions that should not change under level 2 are the current curfew and accommodation capacity restrictions, i.e. the curfew should be maintained at 23:00 to 04:00 and not be changed to 22:00 to 04:00 to enable eating establishments to have the extra hour for staff and patrons to get home and accommodation capacity should be maintained at 100% instead of reducing it to 50% since it would be impractical to reduce occupancy when many establishments are already occupied by holiday-makers and guests.
3. Indoor social, cultural and religious gatherings should be limited to 50 persons

6. In an effort to protect other countries from the new coronavirus variant, all travelers leaving South Africa must have a rapid antigen test