

To: All Employees
From: Dr Kamy Chetty
Date: 4 May 2020
Re: COVID-19

Dear Colleagues

It is with regret that I need to inform you that there are now 18 members of staff at National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS) laboratories have contracted the COVID-19 virus. The staff members are all from laboratories or are employed in roles that are not involved in COVID-19 testing.

Following on from the communique on 30 April, which detailed the 15 staff members who have contracted COVID-19 in Cape Town, three other employees have tested positive.

Port Elizabeth

On 22 April, a medical technologist from the Chemistry Laboratory in Port Elizabeth consulted her General Practitioner (GP) as she was experiencing flu-like symptoms. As her temperature was only 36°C degrees the GP ruled out testing for COVID-19. On Sunday, 26 April 2020, her temperature rose to 40°C, she returned to the GP and was immediately tested and booked off work.

This patient does not work in the laboratory that does the COVID-19 testing. The other 14 people who work on the same shift have been tested, and five have tested positive. The entire team have been quarantined and the Chemistry laboratory is temporarily closed. All staff in the Port Elizabeth office are being tested.

Johannesburg

On 28 April 2020, a messenger from the Charlotte Maxeke laboratory was sampled as part of routine, random sampling of employees at the hospital. The patient is asymptomatic and was tested on his first day back at work after 7 days leave and tested positive. Contact tracing is underway, all the NHLS employees with whom he has been in contact, have tested negative.



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Kimberley

On Friday, 1 May 2020, a clerk from the Kimberley Laboratory was admitted to hospital for another medical condition. As part of hospital protocol, he was tested and found to be positive. Contact tracing is being done amongst staff and the patient's family.

All COVID-19 tests that are sampled in Kimberly are processed in the Universitas laboratory in Bloemfontein and there is no direct contact with samples for Kimberly staff.

Ellisrus

On Saturday 2 May 2020, three members of staff in the Ellisrus laboratory were identified as having been in contact with a COVID-19 positive patient. All three tested negative and the quarantine process is being implemented.

NHLS has done an initial investigation into the source of the infection in each case and has contracted an independent expert to investigate and confirm the nature of the transmission.

Once again, if you feel any symptoms please contact the NHLS staff hotline on 011 386 6131 or complete the questionnaire by clicking this link <http://ohasis.nhls.ac.za/CovidScreening.aspx> and a nurse will contact you. Please all follow the COVID-19 guidelines, use the PPE and sanitization equipment provided and stay safe.

Kind regards

Dr Kamy Chetty