

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH: A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

Sexual and reproductive health services are urgent and cannot be postponed during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The majority of women and adolescent girls in South Africa rely on public sector clinics for the provision of long-acting contraceptives. The COVID-19 lockdown has exacerbated the lack of access to contraceptives, particularly as taxi transport was restricted during level five of the lockdown.

Disruptions in the pharmaceutical supply chain will lead to further shortages of contraceptives, condoms, antiretroviral medication for HIV/AIDS and antibiotics to treat sexually transmitted infections. The lack of access to other essential services such as antenatal services, safe abortion services, safe delivery services and family planning services could cause more deaths than the COVID-19 outbreak itself.

With the COVID-19 outbreak, inequalities, poverty and poor health among women will come to the fore. In the absence of contraceptives and condoms, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and HIV infections will increase dramatically. "The government, policymakers, public health experts and civil society organisations need to monitor and protect the needs of women and girls by safeguarding sexual and reproductive



COVID-19 is a threat to sexual and reproductive health services.

health services in their COVID-19 approach," says Desiree Govender.

Sexual and reproductive health is a human rights issue, and health systems must maintain a human rights approach to ensure the accessibility and availability of these services.

"It is important to sustain a human rights climate during the COVID-19 threat, particularly

with regard to community participation, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability."

Various recommendations have been outlined for sexual and reproductive health services during the COVID-19 crisis, such as allowing people to access these services during travel restrictions without legal implications.



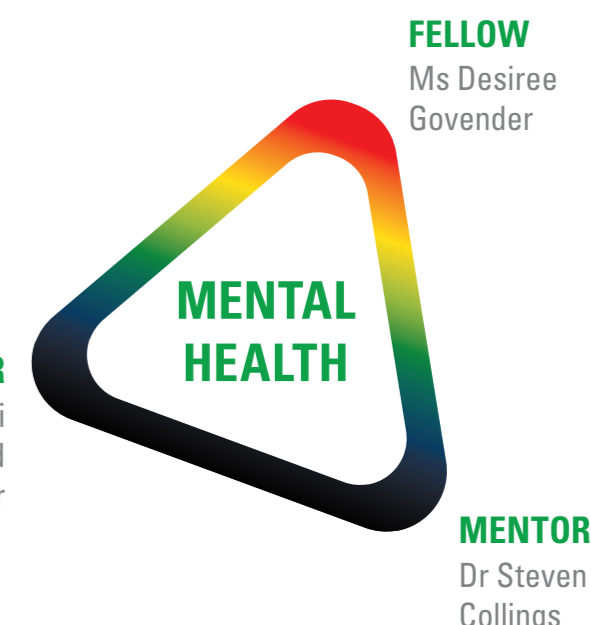
Towards Research Leadership

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