

DR JOCELYN HELDIG

MBChB (UCT) FCP (SA) MMed Int Med (SU) Cert Endo & Metab (Phys)

28th April 2020

Dear patients and colleagues,

All that we can be sure of these days is that life itself, and how we have always known it, is uncertain. Rules, regulations and numbers change on a daily basis and, as a result of this, we need to adapt and change as well. Ironically, nowhere is this more true than in the practice of medicine.

2020 is a challenging time to be a doctor; we need to find a balance between offering our patients the best care, but in a way that limits their exposure to other people and to health care environments.

While our hospitals still have the capacity to cope with the number of COVID-19 patients that are currently admitted, we need to endeavour to offer our outpatients the best possible continuity of care in these trying times.

Therefore, my practice has taken the decision to implement the **following changes which are effective from the 5th May 2020**. Please understand that due to the constantly evolving challenge of this disease, these changes are dynamic and will be modified as necessary.

1. **New patients:** to offer my new patients the best possible care, I have decided to offer you a face-to-face in-rooms consultation or a virtual consultation (via Skype, Zoom or telephone). Ideally, a letter from your referring doctor should be sent ahead of time so that we can optimize your visit to us with the necessary investigations conducted prior to your visit. If you decide to see me for an in-rooms consultation, strict precautions will be implemented and I have outlined these below. If you decide to do a virtual consultation and I feel a physical examination is an integral part of the assessment, we will arrange an in-rooms examination when it is convenient for you and this will be included in the cost of your initial consultation.
2. **Follow-up patients:** as far as possible, I would highly recommend you schedule your routine follow-up consultation with me virtually (via Skype, Zoom or telephone). This is, of course, the safest option for all parties involved. If you feel strongly that you need a face-to-face consultation, this will most certainly be considered after discussion with me.
3. **Virtual and in-rooms consultations will be charged at the same rate**
4. **Repeat scripts without regular assessment and follow-up do not constitute best medical care.** I therefore do not advise asking for a repeat script in lieu of a consultation. I will not issue repeat scripts without a consultation if I have not seen you within the past six months as this is not medico-legally acceptable according to the Health Professionals' Council of South Africa (HPCSA). It is important to note lock-down measures will be in place for many months so if you are apprehensive about exposure to a hospital environment, a virtual consultation is advised.

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5. In-rooms precautionary measures for face-to-face consultations:

- a. Necessary paperwork to be completed online ahead of time; a standard COVID-19 screening questionnaire will be emailed to you before your consultation which must be completed, signed and emailed back to us 24 hours ahead of your appointment. Please note that if you answer YES to any of the questions, your appointment will be postponed to a later date.
- b. We request that you wait in your car until the waiting area is clear of other patients; Shandre will call you from your car once the waiting area has been sanitized
- c. The waiting area will be kept as clear as possible at all times
- d. Please wear a cloth mask to your consultation. If you do not have one, we will provide this for you.
- e. I will be wearing a surgical mask as well as gloves and an apron when I examine you.
- f. All staff will be wearing masks and will adhere to strict and regular handwashing principles.
- g. All surfaces will be cleaned with the recommended bleach solution between consultations
- h. We request **that patients come alone to their consultations** to minimize exposure; if you are unable to come alone and you require a carer, please inform us ahead of time so that we can accommodate for this.
- i. We recommend downloading SnapScan on your cellphone ahead of time so that payment can be made in a contactless fashion. If you are unable to do this, we do have a touch facility on our credit card machine.

- 6. Consultations with Mariam Forgan, our in-house dietician:** if you are a new patient who is consulting us for diabetes or weight management, you will most likely require a consultation with Mariam Forgan, who is our consultant dietician at the practice. To facilitate this and limit unnecessary movement for you, this would then be recommended directly after your consultation with me so please make provision for this on your schedule. **Note that Mariam will charge her own fee for this consultation.**

The aim of this plan is to do what is safest for you. We appreciate your patience and trust during this challenging time and hope that we are able to forge a continued working relationship in the coming months.

Warmest regards
Jocelyn Hellig & team



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