

# During the COVID-19 pandemic, oral health services including routine treatment may continue but must follow established international and South African protocol

SADJ August 2020, Vol. 75 No. 7 p351 - p352

**KC Makhubele**  
CEO of SADA



The South African Dental Association (SADA) hereby responds to the statement released by the World Health Organization (WHO): Considerations for the provision of essential oral health services in the context of COVID-19, on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020

After careful consideration and in consultation with workstreams working in various protocols regarding the provision of oral health services during the COVID-19 pandemic, SADA respectfully yet strongly disagrees with the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendation to delay "routine" dental care in certain situations due to COVID-19.

A blanket statement such as the recent one by the WHO cannot, therefore, be supported. It is without a doubt that oral health is integral to overall health and neglect and delay of certain treatments may lead to extensive damage and increased financial implications to correct.

Consequently, dentistry is essential healthcare, because of its role in evaluating, diagnosing, preventing or treating oral diseases, which can adversely affect systemic health. Each country is at a different stage of the pandemic and each country has to respond appropriately based on its assessment of its unique situation.



The South African Government has set out clear guidelines at various stages of alert. This is the context in which the profession operates.

Our stance is supported by the decision of the FDI World Dental Federation, which SADA belongs to. The FDI is made by approximately 200 country (National) dental associations in about 130 countries internationally. Following the general provisions of the WHO regarding oral health services, SADA published a well researched and widely supported protocols - The SADA Dental Clinical Protocol, available at [www.sada.co.za](http://www.sada.co.za), to ensure that patients, staff and healthcare workers are adequately protected.

The SADA Dental Clinical Protocol to which all dentists should adhere rests on the following four pillars:

1. Proper ventilation of the practice.
2. The use of high-volume evacuation (HVE) to evacuate aerosols.
3. The use of rubber dams (a protective film to isolate the oral cavity) whenever possible in combination with HVE.
4. The correct use of appropriate PPE during each procedure.



