



South African Heart Association

Advancing cardiovascular care for all living in South Africa

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SA Heart® Statement on COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccine

SA Heart® (The South African Heart Association) noted the recent video and commentary by Dr Susan Vosloo proclaiming her personal anti-vaccination beliefs around COVID-19. Although Dr Vosloo is a well-respected cardiothoracic surgeon, her personal opinion is in direct contradiction to current evidence-based standard of care both locally and internationally.

SA Heart®, representing the opinion of cardiovascular practitioners in South Africa, recognizes and advocates for the use of vaccines in the prevention of severe COVID-19 infections. There is clear scientific evidence for the use of vaccinations to reduce the risk of both hospitalization and death in COVID-19 infections and with the benefit of vaccination far outweighing its risk.

There are currently two SARS-CoV-2 vaccines being used in the national vaccine programme in South Africa: the Pfizer-BioNTech and the Johnson & Johnson vaccines. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is an mRNA vaccine that is given as two doses separated by 21 days. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is an adenovirus-vectored DNA vaccine given as a single dose. Both were evaluated in randomized controlled trials involving over 40,000 participants to evaluate efficacy and safety before being used in vaccine programmes. In these trials, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine resulted in a 95% reduction in COVID-19 infections. A similar reduction in cases of severe COVID-19 was observed. The Johnson and Johnson vaccine resulted in a 66% reduction in cases of moderate to severe-critical COVID-19 and an 85% reduction in severe-critical COVID-19. More recent epidemiologic studies have shown that with the spread of the delta variant of the virus the efficacy of vaccines is reduced, but the vaccines remain highly effective at preventing severe COVID-19 that results in hospital admission and death.

Mild side effects are common with all SARS-CoV-2 vaccines and reflect the immune system being stimulated by the vaccine. Severe side effects have also been reported in a transparent manner during the trials and during programmatic use but are exceptionally rare. The overwhelming benefits of vaccination in terms of preventing death from COVID-19 far outweigh the risks of these rare severe side effects.

As a body, we therefore recommend the use of vaccination for COVID-19 and would encourage all citizens, especially those with comorbidities like heart disease, to register for vaccination.

#covidvaccinessavelives

Regards

Dr Blanche Cupido
President: SA Heart®