

South African Tissue Bank Association

COVID-19: Position Statement on Tissue Banking activities

The effects of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, as declared by the World Health Organization (WHO), were appreciated here in South Africa when President Cyril Ramaphosa declared this a national disaster on 15 March 2020. Subsequently, the country went into a 21-day lockdown at midnight on Thursday 26 March 2020.

As the number of infections increases, SATiBA recognises the crisis as one which will have a significant impact on tissue banking and distribution activities throughout the country.

Epidemiological evidence shows that extensive social distancing combined with general hygiene are effective ways of flattening the curve and curbing the spread of the virus.

- We therefore urge all tissue banks to **consider the implementation of additional measures** to ensure a safe and healthy work environment for employees and stakeholders.
- Until further information becomes available regarding the impact of COVID-19 on **donor selection criteria, we encourage tissue banks to proceed with caution** and work in close contact with medical directors to determine donor suitability.
- Trusting that this is a temporary problem, we **encourage the continuation of tissue procurement and processing in a safe and responsible manner**, where possible.
- All tissue banks, if they have not already done so, **should apply for a certificate of permission** to operate during lockdown from CIPC.
- All tissue banks should **issue staff members with permits** allowing them to travel on national roads and gain entry into hospitals, forensic pathology facilities and funeral parlours.
- We encourage our colleagues in organ donation, forensic pathology and the funeral industry to **continue referring potential donor cases** for evaluation by tissue banks.

For further reading, we refer you to the following links:

WMDA has guidelines on bone marrow and cord blood collection:
<https://share.wmda.info/display/DMSR/Coronavirus++COVID-19#/>

GAEBA has recommendations regarding Ocular tissue donation:
<https://www.eatb.org/images/GAEBACOVID19Alert25March2020.pdf>

Spanish recommendations regarding organ and tissue donation:
<https://www.eatb.org/images/COVID-19SummaryofSpanish.pdf>

AATB recommendations for additional screening of potential donors
<https://www.aatb.org/content/bulletin-20-9>

Due to global lockdowns, SATiBA has had no option but to postpone the 9th World Congress in Tissue banking by one year. New dates will be communicated as soon as these can be confirmed.

These are very uncertain times for all and SATiBA encourages vigilance by its members. Let us remain positive and contribute where we can, and prepare ourselves to resume activities in a post-COVID-19 world, which is likely to differ significantly from what we have lived and experienced thus far.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael S. Pepper". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M".

Prof MS Pepper
SATiBA President & Chair of the board
31 March 2020