

Cuban medics arrive in SA to fight Covid-19

A total of 217 Cuban health specialists and workers arrived in South Africa over the weekend to boost the local sector in its efforts to flatten the Covid-19 curve.



Photo: @PresidencyZA

The group comprises:

- epidemiology, biostatistics, and public health experts;
- family physicians to guide interventions through door-to-door testing and to assist local health workers in health promotion and disease surveillance at the community level;
- healthcare technology engineers to assist in maintaining the inventory, deployment and repair of aged medical equipment; and
- technical specialists.

The Cuban medical team will first be quarantined in a hotel in Pretoria for 14 days, before being deployed across the country.

Currently, South Africa has 4,793 identified positive cases of the coronavirus and 90 recorded deaths due to the virus.

Lwazi Manzi, a Department of Health spokesperson, said the South Africa government had requested the assistance of the Cubans before the country reached an infection rate and death toll as high as that experienced by countries like Italy, Spain and the US. "We're not going to wait until we have a crisis before doing what we need to do. Italy waited until they had a crisis before they started calling for help and it's the same with Spain."

Long-standing bilateral relationship

The Presidency said in a statement that: "The strong and historic relations between the two countries has seen bilateral agreements and technical cooperation in many areas, including health, human settlements, public works, infrastructure, water resource management, sanitation and basic education, among others.

“The deployment of Cuban doctors, engineers and technical experts in all the provinces of South Africa rendering important services, is a demonstration of the strategic partnership and solidarity between South Africa and Cuba and a good example of south–south cooperation,”

Over 732 South Africans, many from previously disadvantaged communities, received their first five years of medical training in Cuba and have qualified as doctors since the inception of the Nelson Mandela/Fidel Castro medical training programme in 1997.

Many others continue receiving medical training in Cuba and will also provide in the coming years much needed primary healthcare services to their local communities.

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