What's going to change in the healthcare industry post Covid-19?

As we move through the global Covid-19 pandemic, it's highly likely that the healthcare industry will change – both globally and within South Africa. There will most likely be a vaccine, we'll have more data about our patients, and perhaps there will even be a better customer experience across the healthcare industry. Besides these, what else will change in the healthcare world post-coronavirus?

1. The possibility of an immunity passport

A heated topic of discussion in recent weeks has been around issuing Immunity Passports, also known as Digital Health Passports, that could be used to certify that someone is immune to Covid-19.

On the plus side, Immunity Passports could assist in reopening the economy and are currently being considered by several countries in the world. They could be presented to allow someone safe domestic or international travel, or to attend large sporting and cultural events without putting oneself or others at risk. Hospitals and medical teams could use them so that frontline workers lacking immunity don't come into unnecessary contact with Covid-19 patients. In fact, they could potentially end lockdown for many people.

The problem is that scientists don't yet know whether having the virus confirms immunity, and treating people differently based on their immunity status raises some serious ethical questions. Also, with only a small percentage of the population infected at this stage, it would be impractical to implement these passports now.

Immunity Passports could also encourage people to deliberately become infected with Covid-19, with the hope that they are able to recover and be cleared for work. It's also unknown right now whether people who have recovered from the virus are protected from a second infection.

Ultimately, at the heart of it, I feel that the idea of an Immunity Passport is hugely discriminatory in that it would create two classes of citizens: one class who could go back to work and freely go about their lives, and another class who would be restricted by lockdowns while waiting for a vaccine to be developed.

2. Brand new hygiene and social distancing habits

We have officially entered Level 3 of lockdown in South Africa, and the economy is slowly opening with more people returning to work. Many of us are anxious about this and the possibility of being exposed to the virus. Here are a few things that you can do to keep yourself and others safe:

Pay attention to personal hygiene:
Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, scrubbing for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser
Don't touch your face

Cover coughs and sneezes with the inside of your elbow or upper arm
Stay home if you're feeling sick, and seek appropriate medical advice.

Keep your work surfaces clean:
Use a product that contains at least 70% alcohol
Sanitise work tops, door handles, light switches and cellphones regularly
Don't dry the surfaces after wiping them down – they need to remain wet in order for the product to work.

Practice social distancing:
Keep 1½ to 2 metres away from others
Work from home if you can
Have virtual meetings via Microsoft Teams or Zoom
If you simply cannot work from home, remember to wear a cloth mask for the protection of yourself and others.
These practices are still new to us, but they are here to stay. The virus is not going anywhere anytime soon, so we might as well get used to them in our workplaces as part of the "new normal".

Implementation of sustainable work solutions

When it comes to work, I am one of the lucky ones who has been able to work from home 100% during the lockdown period. These past few weeks have been productive for me, and I feel like I can get a lot more done in a shorter amount of time.

Generally, my job entails that I travel quite a bit. But things have changed – a lot! Firstly, I no longer have to travel to the office and sit in traffic for over an hour each day. Secondly, no time is wasted travelling to clients' offices from one meeting to another. Thirdly, I have saved the company thousands of Rands in travel costs between various cities in the country. Best of all, my stress levels have dropped significantly!

I believe that Covid-19 has forever changed the way that we will work in the future, and working remotely has many advantages:

Cost saving opportunities for both companies and employees
Lower office space costs
Less money spent on commuting to and from work
Fewer business trips
Reduction of carbon footprints by reducing commuter travel
More productive meetings via platforms such as Skype, Zoom and Microsoft Teams

There are, however, some pitfalls to be mindful of when working remotely. One of the things that I have had to learn over this time is how to balance work life and private life. The boundaries are sometimes a bit blurred, and it's easy to get caught up spending too much time on one or the other. Hopefully though, we will move out of lockdown carrying some of these benefits with us.

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/whats-going-change-healthcare-industry-post-covid-19-michelle-morton/?published