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22 March 2020

UCT urges confidentiality in COVID-19 cases

Based on the experience of three cases of staff members who tested positive for COVID-19, the University of Cape Town has called for confidentiality in relation to any reported cases.

In all cases, the staff members immediately self-isolated themselves and informed their departments. The provincial Department of Health began immediate contact tracing in all three cases and identified people that were in close contact with the three staff members. Those individuals are now quarantined for two weeks.

Read the full communication by the chief operating officer, Dr Reno Morar, below:



From the Desk of the Chief Operating Officer

The importance of confidentiality in managing reported cases of COVID-19

22 March 2020

Dear colleagues and students

I write on the matter of the confidentiality as it relates to reported cases of COVID-19 at the University of Cape Town (UCT).

You will be aware that we have confirmed three cases of COVID-19 at our institution as of Sunday, 22 March.

In all cases, our colleagues immediately self-isolated and informed their respective departments. The Provincial Department of Health began immediate contact tracing in all three cases and identified people that were in close contact with our colleagues. Those individuals are also now quarantined for two weeks. We are continuing to monitor the situation.

The experience of the three cases has taught us some valuable lessons and I am therefore drawing your attention to the fact that we have to ensure confidentiality at all times.

As the Vice-Chancellor expressed in her [latest VC Desk](#), confidentiality is important when we are dealing with the medical conditions of our staff and students. Breaking that confidentiality is not acceptable for healthcare professionals (which includes health scientists) as it is against their ethical codes. We must in all reported cases (via our email messages, on social media, or in conversations) ensure that we maintain confidentiality. Hence heads of departments and everyone else dealing with a case must be circumspect about sharing information that could identify people and their medical status.

I am asking that you note and share this information with colleagues and fellow students to ensure that the need for confidentiality is upheld.

Sincerely

Dr Reno Morar
Chief Operating Officer

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

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