

SOUTH AFRICA

CoughWatchSA app to help with early detection of Covid-19 second wave

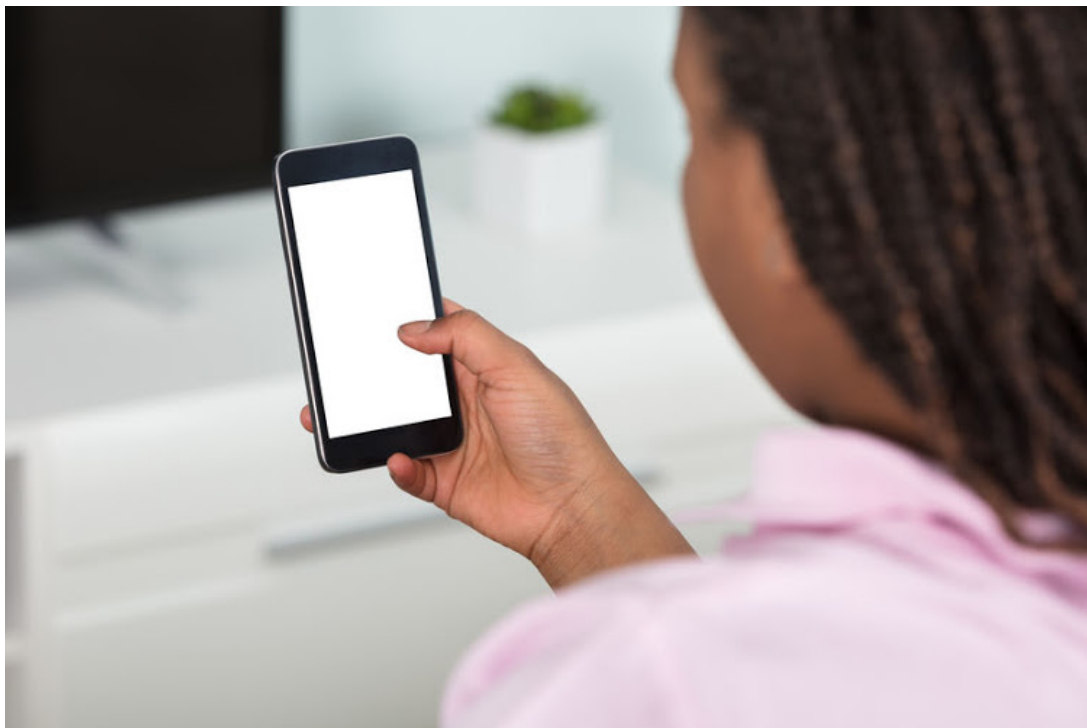
The CoughWatchSA will run as a pilot for the remainder of this year and will be officially launched as a complementary surveillance platform to current disease surveillance systems.

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Reporter



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Image: 123RF/Andriy Popov

The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) has announced that a mobile application aimed at helping with the early detection of the second wave of Covid-19 is expected to launch soon.

The app, CoughWatchSA, will run as a pilot for the remainder of this year and will be officially launched as a complementary surveillance platform to current disease surveillance systems.

The app is available on [Android](#) and [iOS](#) for free download. According to NICD, the app can also assist with the detection of the beginning of the influenza season.

Through CoughWatchSA, users can register and report their respiratory symptoms every week.

“The aim of this platform is to identify and monitor acute respiratory tract infections (ARI) which may potentially include influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and Covid-19. SA may have reached its peak in the cumulative number of cases, but there may be a potential for a second wave of infections,” said the NICD.

The application is a digital participatory surveillance platform that allows for the monitoring and tracking diseases in the population through user-reporting of health information.

"After being anonymised, data is stored in a secure data lake on our servers (AWS in SA)."

The NICD said the platform has been used effectively in Europe, Australia and North America for more than 10 years.

"This platform can detect outbreaks for up to a week or two earlier than traditional surveillance platforms and has been shown to be a complementary disease surveillance platform to current facility-based disease surveillance.

"In lower to middle-income settings, this platform has the potential to assist disease surveillance where testing capacity or access to medical resources is extremely limited. In addition, through user-reporting of health information, we may identify patterns in health-seeking behaviour which is often very limited in the current setting," said the NICD.

The app is not designed to offer medical advice or assistance, said the institute.

The NICD said tracking and monitoring diseases plays an important role in the analysis and reporting on the burden of infections, to inform public health action for the reduction of morbidity and mortality, as well as improving the health of the general population.

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