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CoughWatchSA to assist in early detection of COVID-19

Wednesday, October 28, 2020

The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) is set to launch CoughWatchSA - a mobile application aimed at assisting with the early detection of the second wave of COVID19 cases or the beginning of the influenza season.

Through the CoughWatchSA application, users can register and report their respiratory symptoms on a weekly basis.

“The aim of this platform is to identify and monitor acute respiratory tract infections (ARI) which may potentially include influenza, RSV and COVID19.

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

The platform has been used effectively in Europe, Australia and North America for over ten years.

“This platform is able to 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.

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

In the case of outbreaks, collecting data on confirmed cases allows for the tracking and monitoring of the spread of these diseases; identifying who is at risk of severe illness and mortality, and using this data to implement strategies to reduce the impact of the spread and ultimately save lives. – SAnews.gov.za

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