

## **New app for early Covid-19 detection**

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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 set to launch soon.

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

The app is available on Android and iOS for free download and, according to the NICD, can also assist with the the flu season.

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

“The aim of this platform is to identify and monitor acute respiratory tract infections which may potentially include influenza, respiratory syncytial virus 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,” the NICD said.

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

“All data is completely anonymised upon submission, it will not be possible to link the information provided to any individual or household,” the NICD said.

“After being anonymised, data is stored in a secure data lake on our servers.”

The NICD said the platform had been used effectively in Europe, Australia and North America for 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.

“Through user-reporting of health information, we may also identify patterns in behaviour.” —

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