# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 1413**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 21 MAY 2021**

**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 15)**

**Ms H Ismail (DA) to ask the Minister of Health:**

(1) Whether he will furnish Ms H Ismail with the scientific evidence on which the decision was made, as contained in the circular distributed by his department on 29 January 2021 entitled *Wrapping of coffins with plastic*, wherein some cases of bodies that were wrapped with plastic, the need for funeral directors to wear full personal protective clothing as a precaution, falls away;

(2) whether an individual who handles the deceased can contract COVID-19; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;

(3) whether an individual can contract COVID-19 in the event that there has been contact with bodily fluids from someone who has died of COVID-19; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what (a) are the relevant details and (b) evidence is there showing that it is possible or impossible?

###### NW1610E

**REPLY:**

(1) The evidence is clear and has been documented in the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines on Infection prevention and control (IPC) for safe management of a dead body in the context of COVID-19, interim guidance, 4 September 2020. The National Infection Prevention and Control Guidelines (South Africa), based on WHO recommendations, outlines the evidence and steps required for handling of COVID-19 bodies and safe burial. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has clarified the difference between death from Ebola and COVID-19 and the burial requirement for each. There is no need for extra PPE- gloves and aprons will suffice since the route of transmission is not like Ebola where the virus survives post mortem in body fluids.

(2) No, to date, there is no reported case of SARS-CoV-2 transmission from a dead body to a human. There is very little risk of infection being transmitted from a dead body to those carefully handling the corpse.

(3) No, however;

1. When dealing with a dead body, all handlers must ensure that IPC precautions are in place such as wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) which protects the body, respiratory tract and mucous membranes from accidental splash contamination. Hand hygiene, good ventilation and a clean environment is essential. Good general hygiene is importanct to make sure that working surfaces are free from contamination and by so doing this will ensure safety of everyone using the premises.
2. There is no evidence that SARS-COV-2 can be transmitted via body secretions post mortem.

END.