# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 415**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 13 MARCH 2020**

**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 09)**

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

(1) (a) What number of hospitals are ready to treat patients infected by the coronavirus and (b) does each hospital have the necessary equipment and supplies to ensure the safety of professional health staff;

(2) what (a) number of public clinics  are equipped to handle patients with the coronavirus and (b) precautions will be taken in the event of a breakout of the virus;

(3) on what basis will the decision be made to ban travel to and out of the Republic;

(4) what education campaign programmes are in place to ensure that South Africans are properly guided and informed with regard to the steps to take when they suspect they may have the disease?

###### NW594E

**REPLY:**

1. (a) The number of hospitals ready to treat COVID-19 patients is 262 hospitals.

(b) The Department conducts weekly audits on the availability, requirements and current equipment and commodities in hospitals. Where challenges are found they are highlighted to provincial officials to intervene.

1. (a) All (3467 Primary Health Care facilities/clinics) are provided with the national protocols through their provinces for handling corona virus suspected patients and are submitting individual questionnaires on their readiness to respond to the pandemic.

 (b) Precautions to be taken in the event of an outbreak in Clinics include use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE's) by all staff; ensuring effective triage facilities are in place to separate patients with COVID-19 symptoms from those without symptoms, rapid and safe referral of patients to hospitals for patients who need to be hospitalised.

(3) The initial transmission of the COVID-19 virus was from imported cases from high risk countries. The ban on travel in/out of the country is purely to disrupt transmission from other countries, especially high risk countries.

(4) A comprehensive Risk Communication and Stakeholder Engagement (RCCE) Strategy has been developed as guided by the International Health Regulations of the World Health Organisation.

Some of the Objectives of this strategy are:

* To ensure that people have the life-saving information they need to protect themselves and others (from the virus and to reduce its impact on health, social life, and the economy)
* To ensure consistency in information and language from all partners and avoid misinformation/rumours.
* To inform the general public how the public health response is being conducted and health authorities are being pro-active in monitoring, detecting, and preventing the spread of COVID-19.

To ensure participation of and engagement with relevant communities to work out barriers to the implementation and uptake of public health measures.

END.