

Snorkel masks protect health workers from Covid-19

The plus side of the Covid-19 pandemic is that it has produced some very innovative solutions. At Tygerberg Hospital, doctors have access to modified snorkel masks to prevent them getting Covid-19 while intubating critically ill patients.



Dr Lizelle van Wyk and Professor Pierre Goussard

These masks cover the whole face, forming a tight seal and are usually used for snorkelling in tropical waters. They have been modified with the addition of a breathing filter where the snorkel would usually be. Using these full-face modified snorkel masks, the doctors are now completely protected from breathing in the Covid-19 virus whilst performing highly contagious airway procedures.

One of the hospital's neonatologists and paediatricians, Dr Lizelle van Wyk, is an avid diver and was shown the mask by a diving colleague after Europe had started adapting the mask when the stock of normal N95 respirators became low. She approached both Dr Jack Meintjies, occupational health, and Professor Pierre Goussard, a paediatric pulmonologist, to modify and approve this mask.

The modified snorkel masks are now routinely used by the paediatricians for intubation and bronchoscopy in children suspected of being Covid-19 positive. Tygerberg Hospital recently acquired 300 SEAC® Libera modified snorkel masks for its healthcare workers to use in highly contagious clinical areas.

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