



**Rural Doctor's Association of Southern Africa**

*"Inspiring others to rural health"*

## **RuDASA Press Statement 23 July 2021**

### **UNIVERSAL VACCINATION DAYS IN RURAL AREAS**

The vaccination roll-out programme is helping us to control the epidemic; with some sites hoping that the vaccination programme is the reason for the slow 3<sup>rd</sup> Wave in their areas. To make vaccination days more efficient in rural areas with low population numbers, scattered homesteads, and difficult to access areas, we suggest universal vaccine days rather than age-related vaccine days. The rationale for this is:

- People who are old, frail, or have a disability are usually accompanied by a younger person. We can vaccinate both on 1 day saving the community out-of-pocket transport expenses, which often are up to 1/3 of their monthly social grant, to reach a vaccination site.
- In areas with low populations e.g. farm communities and deep rural settlements, 1 universal vaccine day would cover everybody, thus reducing the government transport spending on return visits to vaccinate the different age groups. Alternatively taxi's can be organised, on a single day, to bring everyone from that area to a central vaccination site; thus making the route economically viable for taxi drivers and decreasing out-of-pocket transport expenditure for people who would have had to rely on expensive private car hire.
- In areas without clinics we need to consider vaccinations sites such as nearby church halls and schools rather than expecting people in poor communities to pay for long trips to reach a vaccine centre at a clinic.

As many people in our rural communities are poor and are less likely to own smart phones, or money to pay for data, we need everybody to be able to register on the Vaccine electronic vaccination data system (EVDS) at vaccination sites, where they can get assistance to sign onto the system, and get vaccinated on the same day.