

Article written by Manager Anneliese Bothma

Why did they forget me?

That was the main question that our residents asked while the novel Coronavirus grabbed hold of our world. Since the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak, our home was in lockdown. At first it was for three weeks that our residents could not see, touch or speak to their families.

The residents were confused about this virus and could not understand why all the precautions and rules were necessary. Suddenly they had to stay in their rooms and the personnel who usually treated them became strangers wearing white overalls and masks. They could not properly hear them speaking from behind the masks ...

Then the news came that Covid-19 was here. Some of our friends had to leave their rooms to go and stay behind a red curtain. We as management saw the fear in their eyes. The fear of themselves dying became overwhelming. Some of the residents had anxiety attacks. One resident greeted everybody because she believed she was going to die. We felt heartbroken because we couldn't – as we usually did – hug them when we encouraged them, saying everything was going to be okay. We were also scared of the lethal unknown. The families could only call or communicate via video calls. "WhatsApp calls" have become commonplace although many residents struggled hearing their loved ones. Both the residents and the children often cried when speaking with each other.

Our social worker tried her best to bring hope and show them that we still cared and that that wouldn't change.

Sometimes we heard from the residents that their children forgot about them because they did not contact them as they forgot about this virus.

More and more we heard residents saying their children had forgotten about them because they did not contact them.

The saddest day was when one of our residents suffering from Alzheimer was busy dying and her three children did a WhatsApp call over the phone's speaker together with the manager, auxiliary nurse and social worker. They told her that they love her. All of us started crying when she recognised them and started crying. She passed away while in our arms.

The Management and staff became extremely tired. While caring for the facility we were afraid of becoming infected. What if we became carriers of the virus and infected our families? What if one of our family members infected us and we spread the disease amongst vulnerable people unknowingly?

Fortunately, we during this time also learnt lots of positive things. We grew even closer to each other as residents as we had to rely on each other. We also more and more saw the staff as people also suffering.

We as management grew closer and became a greater team. We now respect each other even more. We had a wonderful, caring doctor – Dr Erasmus – that guided us. The wonderful news was that the 20 residents that were treated for Covid-19 in our home all survived.

**THEY DID NOT FORGET ME – IT WAS JUST A SHORT TIME THAT OTHER PEOPLE THAN OUR FAMILIES
CROSSED OUR PATH AND CARED FOR US.**

At this stage our residents and family are visiting on the veranda,

They can even visit their families during the December holidays.