

Managing the risk of the spread of the COVID-19 virus through the implementation a COVID-19 vaccination policy at a South African University

Prof Prakash Naidoo, PhD

University of Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic led to an unimaginable health risk for universities worldwide. In many South African universities, the need to provide face to face learning for disadvantaged students is dictated by challenges of poor accommodation and learning environment in areas where students live, high internet costs and poor connectivity, amongst others. Against a background of an initial low vaccination rate in South Africa, and the risk of exposure of the COVID-19 virus to staff and students at the University of Free State, the university developed and implemented a vaccination policy to manage the health risk emanating from the spread of the COVID-19 virus. This presentation will reflect on the process of developing the vaccination policy and the options provided in the policy for staff and students to access its campuses in a responsible manner. In addition attention will be given to the legal challenges the university encountered from minority unionised and anti-COVID-19 vaccination groups when the policy was implemented. The success of the implementation policy is thus far seen in the high level vaccination rate of its employees and a steady rise in the vaccination rates of students.

Keywords: COVID-19, vaccination, policy, South Africa