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Attention: SAFA president

Dr Danny Jordaan

18 March 2020

## **Re – PSL being played “behind closed doors”**

Dear Dr Jordaan,

In response to the South African Sports minister, Nathi Mthethwa, decision that the PSL can be played behind closed doors, I would like indicate that this decision is **against** medical best practice and decisions taken by several international sporting bodies, including UEFA and Super Rugby. **I would strongly advise that all footballing activities, including all PSL games, should be suspended and re-evaluated at a later stage.**

The reasons that PSL football games should be suspended is multifactorial. The biggest reason relates to the issue of **“social distancing”**. This is defined as an effort for people to be separated from each other for at least 2 metres. The best way to attain this is to prevent people gathering together in any context, including a competitive PSL match. This principle underlines the proactive decisions taken by the South African president on Sunday evening. The reason it is particularly relevant in the South African context is due to the community spread of COVID19 that has already occurred in our country.

The concept of playing competitive football behind closed doors in the context of COVID19 has **not** been shown to be effective, despite other preventative measures being implemented such as hand washing and a no hand shake policy. There are several examples from European football that highlights this point. Some of these include several professional teams in Italy that required entire teams to be quarantined for 2 weeks after playing behind closed doors.

As a medical professional, the concern I have is that we have a unique patient profile in South Africa, have significant socioeconomic and spatial challenges and our hospitals are already overburdened. The impact of COVID19 in our context has the potential to be much worse than our international counterparts. I know that these decisions are very hard and has huge financial and league implications. We have a short window of opportunity in South Africa to work together to “flatten the curve” and minimize the impact of COVID19 in South Africa.

Yours sincerely,

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