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THE NETWORK
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Facultad de Medicina



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"PRIMARY HEALTH CARE: A PATH
TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE"

SYSTEMS AND COMMUNITY BASED
RESPONSES TO COVID-19

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TUFH 2020 Abstracts

Title	Contact, connection and care: a personal reflection of contact tracing during COVID-19 in Cape Town, South Africa
Type	Oral Presentation <i>Systems and Community Based Responses for COVID 19</i>
Presenting Author	PAT MAYERS
Co-Authors	
Country	South Africa
Abstract N°	TUFH485
Content	<p>COVID-19 has changed our lives – at every level. We fear for our families, ourselves and our future. But fear can be paralyzing – and so I volunteered as a contact tracer. Contact tracing involves phoning the person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, explaining the diagnosis and isolation process and determining what support is needed. Is it possible to isolate? Is there food security? What to do if symptoms escalate? All close contacts are phoned to explain the quarantine period. The contact tracer facilitates support through connecting the person and family to a network of governmental support structures and NGOs. I have been privileged to listen to the human stories of the virus and its effects on people's lives. I became connected with people whom I may never meet, who have shared their fears, loneliness, pain and loss, and the joy of recovering and leaving isolation. Sometimes – it's just to hear a voice at the other end of the phone – for reassurance. Even after the 14-day quarantine/isolation, I have been asked to assist with queries about friends, family and workplace issues. Contact tracers have become so much more – we are the caring voice at the other end of the phone, who can make connections, bridge gaps and above all just listen. In this paper I reflect on how this pandemic has highlighted the health care inequity in our country; and how human connection, and compassionate care makes a difference in our response.</p>