



## **La Vie Care lifts those lockdown blues**

by Terry Owen

**Lockdown has caused a huge disruption in the lives of virtually everyone. For older folk, though, it has meant the separation of loved ones that at a time in their lives becomes almost unbearable. La Vie Care has stepped up to the challenge, though, and provided a solution that is simple, yet sensational!**

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I think we've mostly forgotten how good a hug feels. We haven't had one for so long, it almost feels alien to us when we think about it.

Now, that's an alien thought! Yet this what COVID-19 has done. It's forced us to separate and disallowed the chances of families getting together because of social distancing.

It has brought many heart-rending moments around the globe, especially with feelings of loneliness and helplessness that are commonplace against a vicious, invisible foe.

It's really good that scientists and researchers across the world are focused on developing medication and vaccines to fight the pandemic, but all this takes time. A vaccine, especially, which is the only real safeguard we will have to discard the masks and social distancing and get back to "normal", will take time. And time for many is a luxury they can't afford.

### **Visits impossible**

This is especially the case with older folk who are in residential facilities that cater especially for their needs. Since the pandemic began and with the subsequent lockdown and quarantine restrictions that were instituted, this has meant that visits between children and grandchildren have been impossible.

Nothing in the world can describe the feeling that forced separation between mother and child can bring. It literally is heart-breaking. No-one knows this all too well than the staff at La Vie Care, which is a private group of Sub-Acute and Rehabilitation Hospitals, Frail Care and Specialised Dementia Facilities, based in Gauteng. Its objective is to offer the highest quality and personalised care to each individual resident while creating a homely and nurturing environment.

La Vie Care's mission has always been based on this ethos – “our family caring for yours”, and this has gone a long way in providing the much needed succour for residents while keeping their safety foremost in mind at all times. However, while this has indeed been a great help in these strange times, nothing can replace the bond between residents and their loved ones that in so many ways is the greatest source of comfort and healing.

## Coming up with a solution

Some relaxing of lockdown rules recently has, however, given the staff at La Vie Care's residential units a chance to come up with something really special. The new ruling has provided for the easing of travel, meaning that visits to the residential centres have been made possible, but still with the proviso that physical contact is still not allowed, mainly for the protection of the residents.

Well, this was not going to stop La Vie Care in its tracks. One major hurdle had been overcome, and that was the chance for loved ones to physically see each other again – and not merely on an iPhone or laptop. How would they go about this though? They say that where there is a will, there's a way, and La Vie Care set out to prove just that. What happened is remarkable.

They found areas that were perfect for meetings to happen and set their plan in action. In an outside area adjacent to the building, they installed a two-way phone system to enable the parties to talk to each other, with a glass panel separating the people. This meant that for the first time in a long time families were able to get together, albeit with glass separating them.

## The next best thing

“If we can't actually hug each other, this is the next best thing,” said an overjoyed resident. “At least we were able to talk to each other while physically looking at each other. You can't believe what a difference this has made, and I know I speak for my daughter as well.”

It's such a simple solution, yet it's one that overcomes so many obstacles. But that's typical of La Vie Care, and it's little things like this that have earned it its enviable reputation.

The process that was followed is as follows:

- Permission from village/estate property owner(s)
- A two-way phone was purchased and installed.
- The outside areas for families was disinfected and prepared.
- A visitor's schedule was set up, to avoid too many people waiting in line.
- The residents' children were informed of the set-up via call, and reminded via WhatsApp.
- After each visit the area is disinfected and thoroughly cleaned, ready for the next visitor.

## Myriad of benefits

The benefits of such visits can't be over-emphasised. La Vie Care has found that after a visit the resident is so much more positive and there is a happiness that permeates every nook and cranny of the building. They have also found that reliance on many medications falls away.

Emotions can have a direct physical connection. The lifting of moods can directly result in literally "a spring in the step", meaning that the resident is more likely to take walks and enjoy food again. It can also mean that sleeping becomes more fulfilling.

In all, a far more enjoyable time is in the offing for both resident and family. Visitors can see first-hand that their loved ones are being well cared for. Residents can witness the joy on their families' faces as they see each other again. This brings enormous peace of mind, resulting in many and varied positive health aspects.

It's a win-win situation for all!

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