Editorial: World Cup fever: a new epidemic?

It seems that a large proportion of our population has taken leave of its collective sense as they fall ill with an emerging disease that is sweeping the nation. World Cup Fever, of which the South African variant is particularly virulent. Epidemiologists pinpoint the ground zero of the epidemic to Zurich, Switzerland in May 2004 when the successful South African bid was announced. Yes, you have got it right. It is an international disease and even the Americans have succumbed. Incubation varies but is thought to be four to six years. It lies dormant and when least expected it is triggered by a vuvuzela blasting in your ears which is followed by partial deafness and an insane desire either to get away from the noise or to contribute to it. You know you are beyond saving when you actually try to blow one. I was lost in February when I blew my first vuvuzela. My flip from hating (because of the ear-splitting noise and hearing impairment) to euphoria was as complete as it was swift. I have even been known to blow it in the middle of the night to celebrate the most mundane event like when the garbage was finally collected by the formerly striking municipal workers in the middle of the night. They acknowledged by tooting back much to the annoyance of the neighbours. That is just what I mean by the insanity.

This seasonal disease is at its peak right now and you can spot sufferers in that they insist on wearing annoyingly yellow shirts, even if yellow hasn’t ever been their colour. Actually, many look particularly ill in that shade. I have a mild form of the illness as I only succumbed last week when I bought my first green soccer shirt made by enterprising women in Jozi’s Diepsloot. It gives me great satisfaction that the money goes where it should, to a community-based project, and not to enrich the Blatter family businesses/FIFA et al. That would really be loony.

Another form is that currently being experienced by some MECs for Health. They have seen fit to cut back on access to health care by ordinary South Africans during the World Cup. Those who have the least possible likelihood of affording anything except public health care are being asked to wait. Wow. Now that’s really showing signs of World Cup Fever. Even though the incubation is six or so years it appears as even in its prodromal stage it is severe enough to block lateral thinking and to look for making deals with the private hospital groups to use excess beds and facilities.

We do know that greed is certainly one of the complications shown by vendors, many of whom have doubled prices. Our national air carrier, SAA, seems to have come down with a severe dose too. Try taking a plane to a local venues in the next month. Perhaps it is better to try another airline. Ah well, it just shows that no one is immune and that the full effects are not yet know in the interesting disease.

Enjoy the mixed blessing of Word Cup Fever and may your recovery be complete.

Vuvuzela Vicki
Aka Dr Vicki Pinkney-Atkinson former World Cup Phobic.