

Expert blames super-spreader events for latest KZN infection wave

KAREN SINGH

karen.singh@inl.co.za

EPIDEMIOLOGIST and infectious disease specialist Professor Salim Abdool Karim has slammed superspreader events, saying they have been the main cause of a spike in new Covid-19 infections in KwaZulu-Natal in the last week.

As of Sunday, South Africa recorded a cumulative total of 814 565 Covid-19 cases, with 4 116 new cases since the previous daily report and 22 206 people have died.

In the last seven days, Gauteng recorded a total of 2 762 new cases, there were 3 508 in KZN, 7 807 in the Western Cape and 9 035 in the Eastern Cape.

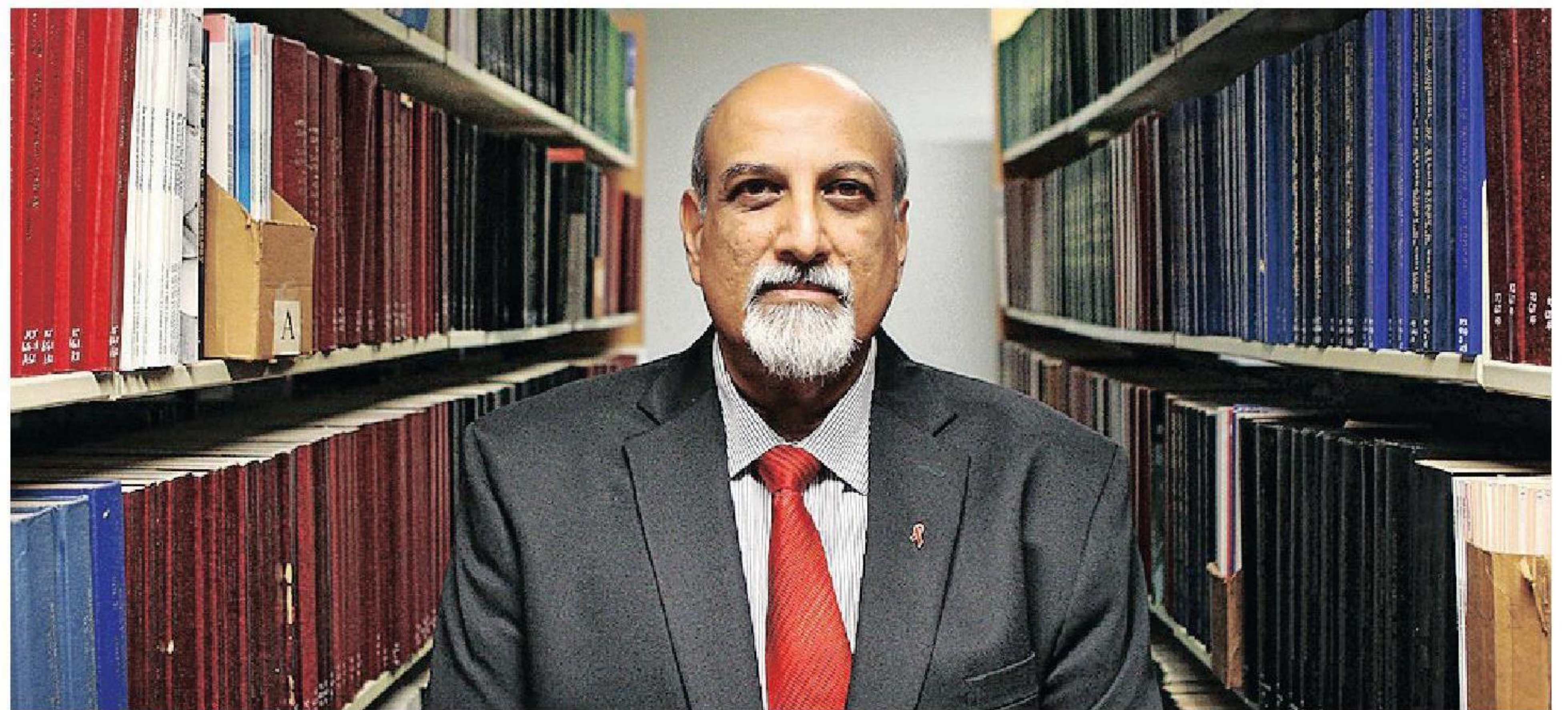
Abdool Karim said while it was still too early to determine if South Africa was in a second wave, he was concerned about the increase in infections in the province and, to a lesser extent, in Gauteng.

He noted that when the first wave began in South Africa, it did not hit all the provinces at the same time, but moved from province to province.

“Given that the epidemic has now been spreading in the Eastern and Western Cape for almost a month, these increases that we are seeing in KZN and Gauteng are quite worrying.”

The specialist said the current numbers were laying the foundation for the second Covid-19 wave.

“We are now getting to a point where the numbers are suggesting that we are entering into a pathway that will take



PROFESSOR Salim Abdool Karim | African News Agency (ANA) Archives

us into a second wave.”

Abdool Karim described the week-long Ballito Rage as the most recent super-spreader event in KZN.

“That is a very clear case of a super-spreader event when you have – from one event – 92 people who became infected.”

He said, based on the information he was given, there were more than 1 000 people attending the event, while regulations allow for 250 people indoors and 500 outdoors.

“If the organisers are found to have broken the rules, in my view, they should be charged and all of the individuals who have acquired infection, and are now quarantined, should consider suing them for loss of income.”

He said superspreader events become the basis for widespread community

transmission.

“They provide the seed by which the virus goes into a whole lot of different communities, all at once, and then it's very hard to control.”

Abdool Karim described a super-spreader event as the engine that drives the spread of the virus.

He said a small number of people go to these events, functions or work and spread it to a large number of people.

“About 20% of individuals who are infected can be responsible for up to 80% of all infections.”

Abdool Karim encouraged eThekweni Municipality to implement methods to establish where events with more than 50 people were taking place.

“Any function with more than 50 people must be registered with the metro police,” said Abdool Karim.