

HST 60percent – 22 September 2023

Free State bottom of the list when it comes to multi-month dispensing of ARVs, survey finds

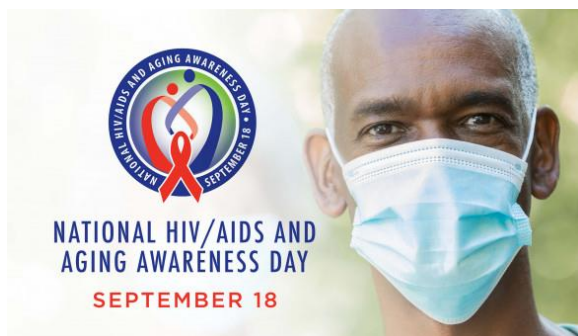


Spotlight | 14 September 2023

The percentage of people living with HIV receiving a three to six-month supply of ARVs at a time in the Free State has dropped from 13% last year to 3% this year, making the province the worst performer in multi-month dispensing of ARVs in the country. This while in Mpumalanga, 64% of people living with HIV receive a three to six-month refill as per national guidelines. This is according to the latest figures from community-led clinic monitoring group, Ritshidze. In its third Free State report, released on 30 August, the group notes several challenges faced by people living with HIV, key populations that include men who have sex with men and sex workers, among others, and other public healthcare users in the province. Among these are a lack of multi-month dispensing of ARVs and long waiting times at clinics, two factors that can make it harder to take treatment as prescribed.

<https://www.spotlightnsp.co.za/2023/09/14/free-state-bottom-of-the-list-when-it-comes-to-multi-month-dispensing-of-arvs-survey-finds/>

Resources for 2023 National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day



Poz | 14 September 2023

From the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) and an upcoming U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) webinar to the Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy (OIDP) Aging Challenge, we encourage you to learn more about National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day (NHAAD). Led by the AIDS Institute, NHAAD is observed each year on September 18th to focus on the increasing number of people living long, full lives with HIV. The awareness day also calls attention to the unique health and social needs, as well as the challenges of HIV prevention, testing, treatment, and care in older adults.

<https://www.poz.com/blog/resources-2023-national-hiv-aids-aging-awareness-day-nhaad>

Are we reaching our commitment to leave no woman or child behind?



PMNCH | 15 September 2023

On September 21st, stakeholders will come together at the United Nations General Assembly to discuss the importance of aligning investments on primary health care as a key pathway for achieving universal health coverage (UHC) (1). This event fulfills the agreement to convene a high-level meeting in 2023 included as part of the Political Declaration of the High-Level Plenary Meeting on Universal Health Coverage resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 2019 (A/RES/74/2) (2).

<https://pmnch.who.int/news-and-events/news/item/15-09-2023-are-we-reaching-our-commitment-to-leave-no-woman-or-child-behind>

Digital HIV-self testing proves unpopular with young Zimbabweans



Aidsmap | 15 September 2023

Research from Zimbabwe into digitally-supported HIV self-testing for young people shows how important it is to understand the context of those being targeted by any new service. A mobile app called ITHAKA which supports HIV self-testing for young people (ages 16–24) in Zimbabwe. The app provides youth-focused HIV information, a visual demonstration on how to self-test, a way to report results, and guidance on what to do next.

<https://www.beintheknow.org/news-and-blogs/digital-hiv-self-testing-proves-unpopular-young-zimbabweans>

South-to-south — Indonesia and Thailand exchange learning on responding to HIV



UNAIDS | 15 September 2023

Thailand's HIV response can provide important learning for other Southeast Asian countries, with the experience of having already reached 90-90-97 in the treatment cascade in 2022, on the way to the achieving the "triple 95s". The country was first in the region to eliminate mother-to-child HIV transmission. AIDS-related deaths have declined by 65% since 2010. With support from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), UNAIDS helped organise for Thailand to share lessons it has learned in its HIV response with Indonesia through a south-to-south learning exchange mission of Indonesian delegates to Thailand. On day one, the Indonesian Ministry of Health and Thai Ministry of Public Health delegates discussed the HIV epidemic, trends, and challenges in each country.

https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2023/september/20230915_indonesia-thailand-hiv-learning-exchange

HPV Is Not Just a Women's Health Issue



Technology Networks | 16 September 2023

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a group of related viruses that infect the skin and mucosal membranes. HPV infection is the most common sexually transmitted disease (STD) worldwide; nearly all sexually active men and women will be infected at some point during their lifetime according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While HPV is often discussed in the context of women's health and cervical cancer risk, a recent study published in *The Lancet Global Health* found that over one-third of men aged 15 years and over are infected with at least one type of HPV. One in five men is infected with one or more types of HPV that are considered "high-risk" strains.

<https://www.technologynetworks.com/cancer-research/articles/hpv-is-not-just-a-womens-health-issue-378846>

Opinion: Let our children be children, not mothers



Citizen | 17 September 2023

At 10 years old, she's a child. She shouldn't be a mother. And she's not the only one. The number of young girls between the ages of 10 and 14 giving birth at public health facilities in South Africa has risen by almost 50% over the past four years. These statistics are disguised as teenage pregnancies, but are likely statutory rape. Does calling it rape make you feel uncomfortable? It should make you outraged instead! This is a complicated problem that is far bigger than we realise. According to Statistics South Africa, 90 037 girls between the ages of 10 and 19 – across all provinces – gave birth from March 2021 to April 2022.

<https://www.citizen.co.za/network-news/inn/article/opinion-let-our-children-be-children-not-mothers/>

Optimizing Mental Health for Women: Recognizing and Treating Mood Disorders Throughout the Lifespan

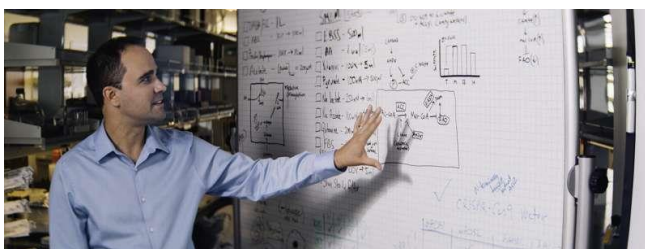


Psychiatrist.com | 18 September 2023

Mood disorders can come and go during the reproductive stages of a woman's life and beyond and can include premenstrual-related mood disorders, depression and other psychiatric disorders during pregnancy, postpartum mood disorders, and depression during menopause, as well as comorbid psychiatric conditions. Women may have regular contact with health care providers at these various stages in their lives, providing an opportunity for treatment intervention.

<https://www.psychiatrist.com/jcp/mental/women/optimizing-womens-mental-health-mood-disorders-throughout-lifespan/>

Researchers discover possible new treatment for triple-negative breast cancer



Medical Xpress | 18 September 2023

Zachary Schug, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Molecular and Cellular Oncogenesis Program of the Ellen and Ronald Caplan Cancer Center at The Wistar Institute, has published a new paper in the journal Nature Cancer. Schug's paper, titled "Acetate acts as a metabolic immunomodulator by bolstering T-cell effector function and potentiating antitumor immunity in breast cancer," demonstrates a double-acting mechanism for fighting a particularly aggressive, difficult-to-treat form of breast cancer. Schug's research shows how silencing a certain gene, ACSS2, may improve existing treatments for patients.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-09-treatment-triple-negative-breast-cancer.html>

Invest in women & children's health, Ramaphosa tells global leaders



Times Live | 18 September 2023

President Cyril Ramaphosa says global leaders have to challenge the disregard many communities and countries have for the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women. He called on countries to invest in interventions for women's, children's and adolescents' health which would yield social and economic benefits that continue throughout life and for generations to come.

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2023-09-18-invest-in-women-childrens-health-ramaphosa-tells-global-leaders/>

HIV & WOMEN 2024



Academic medical education | 18 September 2023

The inaugural edition of the African Workshop on HIV & Women will take place on 22 - 23 February 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya (livestream option available). This exciting new initiative is a regional workshop paired to the annual "International Workshop on HIV & Women". It is an outstanding opportunity for regional, and also international healthcare providers, community representatives, researchers, programmers, government and industry representatives to discuss and further increase their knowledge on the topics related to HIV and women living in Africa. The primary purpose of this

workshop is to support changes that will provide a better quality of life for women living with HIV and reduce HIV transmissions in the region. The format of the workshop enables attendees to learn from renowned HIV experts, discuss challenges, gaps, and explore opportunities for further learning and research.

<https://academicmedicaleducation.com/meeting/african-workshop-hiv-women-2024>

Concerns raised at public health conference over freezing of healthcare worker posts



Spotlight | 18 September 2023

The National Treasury's Cost Containment Letter sent to government departments instructing, among others, the freezing of posts was one of the big themes underlying talks about building South Africa's healthcare worker capacity during the Public Health Association of South Africa's (PHASA) conference held recently in Gqeberha.

<https://www.spotlightnsp.co.za/2023/09/18/concerns-raised-at-public-health-conference-over-freezing-of-healthcare-worker-posts/>

The neglected aspect of mental health recovery: Support groups and why they are taking centre stage



IOL | 18 September 2023

The meaning of recovery from serious mental illness (SMI) has come a long way. It used to be overlooked as a goal of treatment, but today, it takes centre stage in mental health policy. It is alarming to learn that the World Health Organization reported over 970 million people were suffering from mental disorders worldwide in 2019.

<https://www.iol.co.za/sunday-tribune/lifestyle/the-neglected-aspect-of-mental-health-recovery-support-groups-and-why-they-are-taking-centre-stage-606490d5-b64d-4e90-b3b3-9a533a23df1d>

Another class of cancer drugs may contribute to curing HIV



Aidsmap | 18 September 2023

Two drugs from a class new to HIV medicine called BH3 mimetics were unveiled at July's 12th IAS Conference on HIV Science in Brisbane. They may contribute to a cure for HIV by killing off long-lived cells that contain HIV genes in their DNA. Notably, venetoclax (Venclexta) and obatoclax only killed off cells containing intact DNA, capable of giving rise to new viruses, and did not delete cells containing defective, harmless DNA.

<https://www.aidsmap.com/news/sep-2023/another-class-cancer-drugs-may-contribute-curing-hiv>

US study confirms no increased risk of neural tube defects after taking dolutegravir in pregnancy



Aidsmap | 19 September 2023

A study of births in women exposed to dolutegravir around the time of conception has confirmed that infants exposed to dolutegravir do not have an increased risk of neural tube defects. The study authors say that their study suggests that in a setting where food is supplemented with folic acid, infants exposed to dolutegravir around the time of conception or in early pregnancy do not show an increased risk of neural tube defects such as spina bifida. But the study did find a slightly increased risk of pregnancy loss in all women with HIV who were taking antiretroviral treatment around the time of conception.

<https://www.aidsmap.com/news/sep-2023/us-study-confirms-no-increased-risk-neural-tube-defects-after-taking-dolutegravir>

Rural healthcare — a constant struggle against heavy odds



Daily Maverick | 19 September 2023

As the government fails to fulfil its constitutional mandate of providing equitable healthcare services to all South Africans, healthcare workers have stepped in. They often have to moonlight as researchers, community advocates and social workers, and even contribute to health policy development.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-09-19-rural-healthcare-a-constant-struggle-against-heavy-odds/>

HIV/AIDS services: Age consent policy long overdue for review-APYIN



The Sun | 19 September 2023

Association of Positive Youths Living with HIV/Aids in Nigeria (APYIN) have demanded urgent actions that would culminate in review of the age of consent policy on HIV/Aids testing and treatment. The Association confirmed that the age of consent was recently reduced to 14 years but was restricted to testing services alone, thus excluding others services are around HIV/Aids, hence the push that would, expectedly, enable access to HIV and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Right (SRHR) services for adolescents and young people.

<https://sunnewsonline.com/hiv-aids-services-age-consent-policy-long-overdue-for-review-apyin/>

NEW REPORT SHOWS EC PATIENTS STILL FACE STIGMA AND POOR HEALTH SERVICES



Health E News | 19 September 2023

Eastern Cape patients using public health facilities report being turned away, those living with HIV being shouted at, while key populations face hostile services from healthcare workers. These are some of the findings outlined in a new report by Ritshidze, which is a coalition of non-profit HIV advocacy organisations. The report was launched on Tuesday this week, during a community meeting at Buffalo City in the Eastern Cape. The report indicates ongoing staff shortages, disorganised filing systems, limited pick-up points for ARVs, lack of information about access to harm reduction services.

<https://health-e.org.za/2023/09/19/new-report-shows-ec-patients-still-face-stigma-and-poor-health-services/>

PEPFAR'S CONTINUED FUNDING IS KEY FOR ENDING AIDS AS PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT



Health-e news | 19 September 2023

Top scientists, opinion leaders, civil society groups and politicians are calling on United States (US) policymakers to vote in favour of the continued funding for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The voting process – known as a reauthorisation – is a routine process that happens on a five-year cycle. It was last reauthorised in 2018. The deadline for the next reauthorisation is the end of September 2023. PEPFAR is the US government's effort to combat the AIDS epidemic. It's the single largest fund dedicated to a single disease. Since its inception in 2003 PEPFAR pumped billions of dollars into the AIDS response. Thanks to the programme, around 20 million people are on HIV treatment, 1.5 million have access to pre-exposure prophylaxis, and around 25 million deaths have been avoided.

<https://health-e.org.za/2023/09/19/pepfars-continued-funding-is-key-for-ending-aids-as-public-health-threat/>

We Must Harness the Power of Comprehensive Sexuality Education to End AIDS | Opinion

Newsweek

Newsweek | 19 September 2023

This summer, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) released a report outlining a "path that ends AIDS." The report reflected on the past, remembering that two decades ago there seemed to be no end in sight for the pandemic. There were approximately 2.5 million individuals who were newly infected with HIV each year, treatment was complicated and expensive, and stigma and discrimination were entrenched and widespread. In the latest release, UNAIDS highlighted that political commitments, investing in evidence-based interventions, and forming partnerships with stakeholders and communities led to an approximately 70 percent reduction in HIV deaths from its peak in 2004.

<https://www.newsweek.com/we-must-harness-power-comprehensive-sexuality-education-end-aids-opinion-1827207>

[WATCH] How anti-cervical cancer jabs work



Bhekisisa | 19 September 2023

Getting a vaccine against a type of human papillomavirus can prevent cervical cancer later in life in nine out of 10 women — and the jabs are free at state schools for 9–15-year-olds. In 2014, almost 90% of girls at public schools in South Africa got their first of two doses of this shot. But after the COVID-19 pandemic, the number dropped to about five out of 10. In this short video, our TV team explains how these jabs work, how much they cost and why they're lifesavers.

<https://bhekisisa.org/multimedia/videos/2023-09-19-watch-how-anti-cervical-cancer-jabs-work/>

The Public Health Association of South Africa (PHASA) – calling all public health champions!



PHASA is a voluntary organisation of individuals passionate about population health improvements and the reduction of health inequities, and whose work focuses on the prevention of disease, the

promotion of health, and the improved functioning of the country's health care system. Are you passionate about improving the health and wellbeing of communities? Do you want to expand your professional network and stay current in the field of public health? Do you want to be part of the movement to improve Public Health? Then join the Public Health Association of South Africa today to make a difference and enhance your career!

As a member, you will:

- Gain access to cutting-edge research, resources, and best practices
- Connect with public health professionals from around the world
- Participate in educational events and conferences
- Contribute to shaping the future of public health
- Have access to mentors in the field
- Be at the forefront of advocacy initiatives.

To become a member, simply visit our [website](https://phasa.org.za/index.php/get-involved/membership) and complete the membership application. Don't miss this opportunity to advance your career and improve public health.

<https://phasa.org.za/index.php/get-involved/membership>

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