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## ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

### **Health systems resilience in fragile and shock-prone settings through the prism of gender equity and justice: implications for research, policy and practice**

*Biomed Central | 21 February 2022*

*Wesam Mansour, Abriti Arjyal, Chad Hughes, Emma Tiange Gbaoh, Fouad Mohamed Fouad, et al.*

Fragile and shock-prone settings (FASP) present a critical development challenge, eroding efforts to build healthy, sustainable and equitable societies. Power relations and inequities experienced by people because of social markers, e.g., gender, age, education, ethnicity, and race, intersect leading to poverty and associated health challenges. Concurrent to the growing body of literature exploring the impact of these intersecting axes of inequity in FASP settings, there is a need to identify actions promoting gender, equity, and justice (GEJ). Gender norms that emphasise toxic masculinity, patriarchy, societal control over women and lack of justice are unfortunately common throughout the world and are exacerbated in FASP settings. It is critical that health policies in FASP settings consider GEJ and include strategies that promote progressive changes in power relationships. ReBUILD for Resilience (ReBUILD) focuses on health systems resilience in FASP settings and is underpinned by a conceptual framework that is grounded in a broader view of health systems as complex adaptive systems. The framework identifies links between different capacities and enables identification of feedback loops which can drive or inhibit the emergence and implementation of resilient approaches. We applied the framework to four different country case studies (Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal and Sierra Leone) to illustrate how it can be inclusive of GEJ concerns, to inform future research and support context responsive recommendations to build equitable and inclusive health systems in FASP settings.

### **Outcomes of people living with HIV after hospital discharge: a systematic review and meta-analysis**

*The Lancet HIV | 1 March 2022*

*Nathan Ford, Gabriela Patten, Ajay Rangaraj, Prof Mary-Ann Davies, Prof Graeme Meintjes, et al.*

The identification and appropriate management of people with advanced HIV disease is a key component in the HIV response. People with HIV who are hospitalised are at a higher risk of death, a risk that might persist after discharge. The aims of this study were to estimate the frequency of negative post-discharge outcomes, and to determine risk factors for such outcomes in people with HIV.

## **Diabetes mortality and trends before 25 years of age: an analysis of the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019**

*Diabetes and Endocrinology* | 1 March 2022

*GBD 2019 Diabetes Mortality Collaborators*

Diabetes, particularly type 1 diabetes, at younger ages can be a largely preventable cause of death with the correct health care and services. We aimed to evaluate diabetes mortality and trends at ages younger than 25 years globally using data from the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) 2019.

## **Introducing an Ethics Framework for health priority-setting in South Africa on the path to universal health coverage**

*South African Medical Journal* | 2 March 2022

*D Blaauw, C Chambers, T Chirwa, N Duba, L Gwyther, et al.*

South Africa (SA) has embarked on a process to implement universal health coverage (UHC) funded by National Health Insurance (NHI). The 2019 NHI Bill proposes creation of a health technology assessment (HTA) body to inform decisions about which interventions NHI funds will cover under UHC. In practice, HTA often relies mainly on economic evaluations of cost-effectiveness and budget impact, with less attention to the systematic, specific consideration of important social, organisational and ethical impacts of the health technology in question. In this context, the South African Values and Ethics for Universal Health Coverage (SAVE-UHC) research project recognised an opportunity to help shape the health priority-setting process by providing a way to take account of multiple, ethically relevant considerations that reflect SA values. The SAVE-UHC Research Team developed and tested an SA-specific Ethics Framework for HTA assessment and analysis.

## **International Women's Day: dismay at alcohol and arms ties**

*The Lancet* | 5 March 2022

*Sophie Cousins*

Health advocates are concerned at the corporate capture of International Women's Day, with the alcohol industry and arms manufacturers backing a popular website. Sophie Cousins reports.

## **Increasing awareness of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and willingness to use HIV PrEP among men who have sex with men: a systematic review and meta-analysis of global data**

*Wiley Online Library* | 7 March 2022

*Zhishan Sun, Qianfei Gu, Yifan Dai, Huachun Zou, Bruce Agins, et al*

Integrated knowledge regarding pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) awareness and willingness to use PrEP can be useful for HIV prevention in high incidence groups. This review summarizes the awareness of PrEP and willingness to use PrEP among men who have sex with men (MSM). The study found that the proportions of PrEP awareness and willingness to use PrEP among MSM have increased since 2014, although the awareness was low and the willingness was moderate. Improving awareness of PrEP through increasing access to PrEP-related health education and enhancing risk perceptions of HIV infection could have positive effects on the willingness to use PrEP among MSM.

## **The Russian invasion of Ukraine and its public health consequences**

*The Lancet Regional Health Europe* | 8 March 2022

*David Leon, Dmitri Jdanov, Christopher Gerry, Pavel Grigoriev, Domantas Jasilionis, et al.*

The unprovoked and unjustified Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 is already having terrible consequences for health. As we write, only seven days since Russian troops crossed the border, substantial numbers on both sides have died, many due to Russian attacks on civilian targets in violation of international law. This catastrophic turn of events comes hard on the heels of the two-year COVID-19 pandemic during which countries of Eastern Europe were among some of the worst affected. All governments are struggling to replenish public finances, with health services facing great pressures, yet the invasion is resulting in substantial resources in Europe now being understandably diverted to bolster defences. The Ukrainian health system is facing exceptional pressure. Demand has vastly increased by the steeply growing number of casualties caused by the attacks on densely populated areas, alongside the ongoing needs of those with serious infectious and chronic conditions. However, its ability to meet these needs is being severely depleted by the reckless destruction of infrastructure, displacement of

health workers and shortage of essential supplies, including oxygen.

### **Childhood Tuberculosis — Time for Shorter and Differentiated Treatment**

*New England Journal of Medicine* | 10 March 2022

*Madhukar Pai and Heather Zar*

Well before the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted tuberculosis care, long treatment duration has been a weak link in the continuum of care. But the past decade has been a turning point in the pioneering of shorter treatment and differentiated care, as opposed to the traditional, one-size-fits-all approach. Shortening of treatment is being achieved by exploiting longer-acting drugs, adding new drugs, or, for persons with nonsevere disease, targeting shorter regimens. For latent *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* infection, several shorter alternatives to the traditional 6 to 9 months of isoniazid therapy now exist, including a 3-month regimen of weekly rifapentine plus isoniazid or a 4-month regimen of daily rifampin. For drug-resistant tuberculosis, 6 months of oral-only regimens such as bedaquiline, pretomanid, and linezolid or these drugs plus moxifloxacin could replace the 24-month standard regimen. For drug-sensitive tuberculosis in adults, a 4-month rifapentine-based regimen containing moxifloxacin was noninferior to the standard 6-month regimen in a recent trial. Where does this leave children, a vulnerable group that is often excluded from randomized trials of new treatments?

### **Thoracic ultrasound for TB diagnosis in adults and children**

*Public Health Action (Ingenta Connect)* | 21 March 2022

*M Fentress, PC Henwood, P Maharaj, M Mitha, R Jackpersad, et al*

Thoracic ultrasound is an appealing alternative to chest radiography for the diagnosis of TB. Based on research experience conducting thoracic ultrasound for adults and children in South Africa, three key considerations for potential scale-up were identified. First, thoracic ultrasound requires a comprehensive training programme for novice users; artificial intelligence may be used to simplify training and interpretation. Second, a robust ultrasound device is needed with good subpleural resolution and a probe suitable for children. Third, comprehensive scanning of the lungs is time-intensive, and shorter scanning protocols may be more feasible in clinical practice.

### **Integrated screening and testing for TB and COVID-19 in Peru**

*Public Health Action (Ingenta Connect)* | 21 March 2022

*MA Tova, S Palomino, J Peinado, C Martinelli, J Jimenez, et al*

We describe the experience of integrating COVID-19 screening and testing into a mobile TB screening unit in Lima, Peru. All attendees received chest radiographs, which were analysed using CAD4TB and CAD4COVID; Xpert MTB/RIF Ultra was used to test for TB, and antibody and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) for SARS-CoV-2. One Xpert-positive TB case was diagnosed per 168 people screened, one person with SARS-CoV-2 antibodies per 3 people screened, and one PCR-confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection per 8 people screened. Integrated screening can help to avoid delays in the diagnosis of both TB and COVID-19.

### **Developing a portable field unit to improve well-child care**

*Public Health Action (Ingenta Connect)* | 21 March 2022

*KE Kinder, GP Douglas, TM Mtonga, E Katsalira, M Lunga, et al*

Pediatric growth tracking has been identified as a top priority by international health agencies to assess the severity of malnutrition and stunting. However, remote low-resource settings often lack the necessary infrastructure for longitudinal analysis of growth for the purposes of early identification and immediate intervention of stunting. To address this gap, we developed a portable field unit (PFU) capable of identifying a child over the course of multiple visits, each time adding new anthropomorphic measurements. We conducted a preliminary field evaluation of the PFU by using the unit on two distinct visits to three schools in the area surrounding a medical clinic in rural San Jose, Honduras. The unit was used to assess children at each school as part of the community outreach.

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## **RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS**

## **COVID-19 vaccine has no lasting impact on menstruation**

*Health-E News | 3 March 2022*

An expert in reproductive health has given women peace of mind as myths continue to do the rounds during the ongoing pandemic – the COVID-19 vaccine doesn't affect your menstrual cycle. Professor Helen Rees, head of the Reproductive Health and HIV Institute at Wits, is also the chair of the South African Health Products Regulatory Association (SAHPRA) board. She has extensive experience working with vaccine preventable diseases. She said that the combination of a new virus and vaccine is the perfect mix for uncertainty and fear. However, it is important to rely on clinical trials and evidence. Rees cited a study conducted by the Commission for Gender Equality which focused on the effect that the vaccine has on a woman's cycle.

## **World Birth Defects Day: Parents gripped by superstitious fear**

*Health-E News | 3 March 2022*

As the globe marks World Birth Defects Day today, many South African mothers and fathers are still gripped by fear based on superstitions and myths. Frustrated by this trend, a Limpopo doctor is educating parents about birth defects to empower them to accept their children's conditions, and follow medical advice. Mashudu Modjadji is afraid her 16-month-old son will die because this is what relatives and strangers constantly tell her. The reason is a reddish mark that developed on her son's neck when he was six-months-old. This Limpopo mom is one of thousands of parents who battle superstition and myths, and whose children face judgement because of birth defects.

## **Young Africans, sexual health and social media: which messages work, which don't**

*The Conversation | 3 March 2022*

The increasing use of social media, particularly in African countries, offers several opportunities to promote messages about sexual health behaviours among young adults on the continent. It can complement existing sexual health promotion strategies, particularly when physical distancing measures limits opportunities to meet and interact in person. In addition, the fact that social media platforms allow for multi-directional communication opens new possibilities. Young people don't just need to be passive consumers of sexual health information. They can also actively engage on sexual health issues in their private space at a time convenient for them. But are these opportunities being used?

## **[PODCAST] When will COVID end? Prof Abdool Karim explains**

*Bhekisisa | 4 March 2022*

## **Health department to suggest that new regulations replace state of disaster**

*Business Day | 4 March 2022*

The health department intends to propose new regulations that will replace the Covid-19 regulations as set out in the national state of disaster when the national coronavirus command council meets within the coming week. Health minister Joe Phaahla says the proposed amendments include changing travel requirements that could make it easier and cheaper to travel safely.

## **World Obesity Day 2022 – Accelerating action to stop obesity**

*World Health Organization | 4 March 2022 News release*

More than 1 billion people worldwide are obese – 650 million adults, 340 million adolescents and 39 million children. This number is still increasing. WHO estimates that by 2025, approximately 167 million people – adults and children – will become less healthy because they are overweight or obese. On the occasion of World Obesity Day 2022, WHO is urging countries to do more to reverse this predictable and preventable health crisis. Obesity is a disease impacting most body systems. It affects the heart, liver, kidneys, joints, and reproductive system. It leads to a range of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension and stroke, various forms of cancer, as well as mental health issues. People with obesity are also three times more likely to be hospitalized for COVID-19. The key to preventing obesity is to act early, ideally even before a baby is conceived. Good nutrition in pregnancy, followed by exclusive breastfeeding until the age of 6 months and continued breastfeeding until 2 years and beyond, is best for all infants and young children.

## **Women and girls carry the heaviest HIV burden in sub-Saharan Africa**

*UNAIDS | 7 March 2022*

Gender inequality and discrimination robs women and girls of their fundamental human rights, including the right to education, health and economic opportunities. The resulting disempowerment also denies women and girls sexual autonomy, decision-making power, dignity and safety. These impacts are most pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa, where adolescent girls and young women (aged 15 to 24 years) accounted for 25% of HIV infections in 2020, despite representing just 10% of the population.

### **Turning the tide on TB**

*NICD | 7 March 2022*

South Africa ranks amongst the high-burden tuberculosis (TB), drug-resistant TB and HIV-co-infected TB countries, globally. However, over the past decade it has made significant progress in turning the tide by adopting the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended diagnostic technologies and therapies for both prevention and management to reduce the burden of the disease. In addition, the strengthening of HIV management has improved in parallel. These interventions have caused in a year-on-year decline in TB incidence, resulting in South Africa being one of six countries to achieve the End TB Strategy milestones for 2020, namely a 20% reduction in new TB cases (incident rate) between 2015 and 2020. Another success is that South Africa is one of 18 high-burden countries to achieve a greater than 80% coverage of testing for Rifampicin (a key drug for the treatment of drug susceptible TB) resistance. While there have been great strides in reducing the number of TB cases, the burden remains high and efforts to further decrease the burden of disease need to continue to achieve the ultimate goal of Ending TB by 2035.

### **Tracking symptoms of respiratory diseases online can give a picture of community health**

*NICD | 7 March 2022*

Respiratory diseases are highly infectious and cause a significant health burden. Disease surveillance is the bedrock of public health responses to outbreaks or epidemics caused by these diseases. Effective surveillance gives an indication of the scale of the problem. But traditional disease surveillance is mostly limited to health facilities or surveillance sites, where doctors and nurses identify cases and report to national authorities. Here, a team from South Africa's National Institute for Communicable Diseases talks about another useful tool: community-based surveillance.

### **Some malaria parasites are evading detection tests, causing an urgent threat to public health**

*The Conversation | 7 March 2022*

Malaria is an old disease. Yet it continues to have devastating impacts on poor people, especially in Africa. To fight the disease, countries primarily use insecticide-treated bed nets to control the mosquitoes that transmit malaria parasites, or medicines to treat malaria patients. These measures have been highly effective over the years. But now they are threatened by mosquitoes resisting the insecticides, and parasites resisting the drug treatments.

### **Act Now to Save Lives and Prevent Migrants From Going Missing**

*World Health Organization | 7 March 2022*

Thousands of migrants go missing or die each year along migration routes. In 2018, United Nations Member States committed to “save lives and establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants” by adopting the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). Four years and more than 15,000 documented deaths later, efforts to provide a meaningful response to this ongoing human tragedy cannot be put off any further.

### **High cholesterol levels: Why taking your medicine diligently is more effective than changing your diet**

*CAN Lifestyle | 7 March 2022*

No one likes the idea of popping pills every morning. Take cholesterol-lowering medicines or statins, for example. To get themselves off the hook, many patients with high cholesterol levels tend to believe that diet changes and other lifestyle modifications alone would work.

Interestingly, when it comes to lowering cholesterol levels, being diligent with your medicine is far more beneficial than giving up wagyu beef. A local study by SingHealth Polyclinics (SHP) has found “adherence to medication to be the most critical factor” compared to other considerations such as ethnicity, diet,

exercise and smoking.

## High Fructose Intake May Trigger Fatty Liver Disease

*Medscape | 7 March 2022*

Adding drinks with a high fructose content to a diet that already includes high fat content can accelerate the chances of **fatty liver** disease, according to scientists at the University of Barcelona.

What to know:

- A high intake of fructose may increase the risk of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, in which too much fat is stored in liver cells.
- High-fructose corn syrup is one of the most common sweeteners in the food industry and is used to sweeten many products despite the scientific evidence that it is associated with metabolic disorders that are risk factors of cardiovascular disease.
- Researchers found that consuming a high-fructose diet for long periods can lead to a deterioration of the layer of cells that creates the intestinal barrier that prevents bacteria and toxins from leaking into the bloodstream and affecting the liver.
- Fatty liver disease can lead to liver inflammation and liver damage, resulting in **nonalcoholic steatohepatitis**, a more aggressive disease that in turn can progress to scarring of the liver (cirrhosis), **liver cancer**, and liver failure.
- Severe fatty liver disease and liver tumors from the gut barrier deterioration created by excessive fructose intake can be prevented with medications.

## 'Turn the clock forward on women's rights': UN chief's International Women's Day message

*United Nations Women | 7 March 2022*

Mr. Guterres highlighted the contribution that women have made to ending the COVID-19 pandemic, hailed the ideas, innovations and activism that are changing our world for the better, and welcomed more women leaders across all walks of life. However, as the UN chief pointed out, women and girls have frequently borne the brunt of the consequences of the virus spreading worldwide, which have included girls and women being shut out of schools and workplaces, led to rising poverty and rising violence, and seen women doing the vast majority of the world's unpaid but essential care work. To remedy the situation, Mr. Guterres called for guaranteed quality education for every girl, massive investments in women's training and decent work, effective action to end gender-based violence, and universal health care. Other measures recommended by the UN chief include gender quotas, that could result in the world benefiting from more women leaders.

## UNAIDS Executive Director's message on International Women's Day 2022

*UNAIDS | 8 March 2022*

Congratulations on International Women's Day to all whose determination and solidarity is the light of hope and the power for change. Women are not waiting to be offered a seat at the table, they are bringing their own fold-up chair. This year's theme calls for "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow". As the women's movements have brought to the fore, and as all the evidence demonstrates, every development goal depends on ensuring the rights of all women and girls. Gender inequality is a threat to everyone. We cannot uphold patriarchy and defeat AIDS.

## Your blood group may determine your risk of severe Covid-19

*Health24 | 8 March 2022*

A new European study has found that higher levels of specific blood proteins in Covid-19 patients are causally associated with hospitalisation and severe illness. The study published in PLOS Genetics investigated a possible connection between blood groups and the likelihood of developing severe Covid-19. The researchers used a genetic tool to screen over 3 000 blood proteins. Researchers identified six proteins that could underlie an increased risk of severe Covid-19 and eight that could contribute to protection from severe Covid-19.

## Finding the right fit: Why South Africa won't be using this COVID pill

*Bhekisisa | 8 March 2022*

A new COVID pill called molnupiravir works (it makes you less likely to end up in hospital with the disease or die of it). But will it work for us? A committee of experts that advises the government on treatment

choices says no, despite it having been approved in South Africa in February. It's not because molnupiravir isn't a good drug — in fact, the World Health Organisation backs it, (albeit with some conditions). But it's not the right drug for South Africa's public health sector. This means the government will likely not be rolling it out at state clinics.

### **Celebrating the solution multipliers**

*United Nations Women | Statement by Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN Women, on International Women's Day, 8 March 2022*

On International Women's Day, we celebrate the power and potential of women and girls. We recognize their courage, resilience and leadership. We mark the ways in which we are making progress towards a more gender-equal world. At the same time, we see how that progress is being undermined by multiple, interlocking and compounding generational crises. Currently, we are witnessing the horrifying situation in Ukraine where the impacts on women and girls, including the hundreds of thousands displaced, remind us: all conflicts, from Ukraine to Myanmar to Afghanistan, from the Sahel to Yemen, exact their highest price from women and girls. The Secretary-General has been clear, War Must Stop.

### **We cannot let war in Ukraine derail HIV, TB and Covid-19 treatment in eastern Europe**

*The Telegraph | 8 March 2022*

It is no surprise that the World Health Organization (WHO) is calling for oxygen and critical medical supplies to safely reach those who need them in Ukraine and moving to establish safe transit for shipments through Poland. But nor is the call new. We've been here before. Russian annexation of Crimea and the conflict in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Eastern Ukraine in 2014 threatened the supply of HIV and tuberculosis medicines. Fragile trans-internal border efforts and financing by the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria allowed the continued supply of the medicines in the separatist territories despite the conflict during the last eight years. One has to assume that should Russia occupy new Ukraine territories, the challenges to guarantee people living with tuberculosis and HIV access to those drugs will be just as great, high risk, if not already lost.

### **Remembering Dr Elvira Singh, the gentle giant behind the National Cancer Registry**

*Daily Maverick | 8 March 2022*

With capable leadership and guidance, Elvira Singh revitalised the National Cancer Registry, effectively dealing with the backlog that negatively affected its image as a reputable registry. She also developed the first urban population-based cancer registry in South Africa, in the City of Ekurhuleni, with the first report published in 2018. The cancer epidemiology research community in South Africa and throughout the world is devastated by the passing of our dear friend and colleague, Dr Elvira Singh, on Sunday, 27 February. Elvira graduated as a medical doctor from the University of KwaZulu-Natal at the end of 2000 and received her master's degree in community health at Wits in April 2009, as well as her fellowship in public health from the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa in May 2009, winning the Henry Gluckman Medal for Best Candidate.

### **Women and girls, HIV and AIDS**

*Avert | 8 March 2022*

Since the start of the global HIV epidemic, women in many regions have been disproportionately affected by HIV. Today, women constitute more than half of all people living with HIV1 and AIDS-related illnesses remain the leading cause of death for women aged between 5 and 49. Young women (aged 15-24), and adolescent girls (aged 10-19) in particular, account for a disproportionate number of new HIV infections. In 2017, 7,000 adolescent girls and young women became HIV-positive. This is a far higher rate than new infections among young men, with young women twice as likely to acquire HIV as their male peers. In sub-Saharan Africa, despite making up just 10% of the population, one out of every five new HIV infections happens among adolescent girls and young women. In the worse-affected countries, 80% of new HIV infections among adolescents are among girls, who are up to eight times more likely to be living with HIV than adolescent boys. It is estimated that around 50 adolescent girls die every day from AIDS-related illnesses.

### **International Women's Day: This disabled female farmer won't be held back**

*Health-E News | 8 March 2022*

This International Women's Day (IWD) wheelchair bound farmer, Lydia Nemafohoni, wants other disabled women to know they can break the biases they face. Left paralysed by a bout of childhood polio, she fights a double bias: for being disabled and for being a woman. Now she's on a mission to help other disabled women feel empowered instead of "feeling sorry for themselves".

## **How Brains Make Memories; Family Size and Dementia; How COVID Hijacks Sense of Smell**

*Medpage Today | 8 March 2022*

Recorded activity of single neurons in the human medial temporal lobe showed that neurons detect cognitive boundaries to create, store, and access memories. (Nature Neuroscience) Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibition boosted endogenous opioid signaling in mice. (Science) Data from 183 member World Health Organization member states showed that living in a large household reduced dementia mortality. (PLOS One) A digital pen recorded patients as they completed the Trail Making Test and picked up subtle measures of cognitive and physical function. (Alzheimer's & Dementia: Diagnosis, Assessment & Disease Monitoring).

## **Helen Joseph Hospital sees uptick in mental health admissions**

*Health-E News | 9 March 2022*

Gauteng MEC for Health, Dr. Nomathemba Mokgethi confirmed that the Helen Joseph Hospital has seen an increase in the number of mental healthcare admissions due to a number of reasons. This includes hundreds of patients, seeking care from outside the hospital's feeder area, flocking to the facility. Mokgethi added that an increase in poor socio-economic circumstances worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of illegal substances, and families who refuse to take back their relatives once discharged, have put additional pressure on the hospital. She was responding to a legislature question and also cited the temporary closure of some sections of the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital (CMJAH) as another contributing factor.

## **Two South African health sector veterans appointed to French National Order of Merit**

*Daily Maverick | 8 March 2022*

Dr Fareed Abdullah and Professor Helen Rees, two South African medical practitioners with a long history of working for better healthcare and human rights within South Africa and the global community, were recently appointed to the French National Order of Merit by French President Emmanuel Macron. In the realm of health and human rights, both Dr Fareed Abdullah and Professor Helen Rees have been a consistent and dedicated presence within South Africa and the international community for more than 25 years. They have shaped healthcare policies and responses, riding out periods of turbulent change in the form of the HIV/Aids crisis and, more recently, the Covid-19 pandemic. In a decision taken by French President Emmanuel Macron on 7 February and announced on 22 February, Abdullah and Rees were appointed as Knight of the French National Order of Merit and Officer of the French National Order of Merit, respectively.

## **It's your last shot at getting a Pfizer vaccine. Here's how South Africa's roll-out is changing come July**

*Bhekisisa | 9 March 2022*

South Africa has received all the 30-million Pfizer COVID jabs it has procured from the drug manufacturer and the last batch that was delivered — a consignment of 4 831 560 shots that arrived between October and December in 2021 — expires at the end of July, health department data shows. After that date, Pfizer jabs not used or redistributed to other countries will have to be destroyed and more doses are unlikely to be procured directly from the company. "We'll see what the uptake looks like, and if needed, we'll ask for our doses from Covax," says Nicholas Crisp, who heads up South Africa's roll-out in the national health department. "But, we're highly unlikely to procure more Pfizer doses after July, because we still have Johnson & Johnson (J&J) doses after July, which is also a good vaccine and should then be used." According to the health department's dashboard, 24 339 805 Pfizer doses had been administered by the end of March 8, but these doses include donations from the United States (7 443 540) and jabs procured via Covax. In total, SA has received 39 272 220 Pfizer doses from its bilateral agreement with Pfizer, US donations and Covax.

## **WATCH: World's first person to receive transplanted genetically modified pig heart dies**

*IOL | 10 March 2022*

A 57-year-old man with terminal heart disease who made history as the first person to receive a genetically modified pig's heart died on Tuesday at the University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC), the hospital said. David Bennett received the transplant on January 7. His condition began deteriorating several days ago, the hospital said on Wednesday, and he was given “compassionate palliative care” after it became clear that he would not recover. Bennett “wasn't able to overcome what turned out to be the devastating debilitation” caused by the heart failure he experienced before the transplant, Dr Bartley Griffith, director of the UMCC cardiac transplant programme, said in a videotaped statement.

## **As SA moves towards scrapping Covid regulations, doctors find themselves on a new medical front line**

*IOL | 10 March 2022*

For most of his medical career, KwaZulu-Natal vascular surgeon Dr Vinesh Padayachy has been fighting a silent illness: lymphatic and venous disease. Now, two years after the Covid-19 pandemic upended the medical world, Padayachy has found himself on a new medical front line – understanding the long-term effect Covid is having on his patients and people with lymphatic and venous diseases. “The scientific world is continuously making new discoveries on what has become known as long-haul or long-term Covid. People who have lymphatic and venous Diseases such as deep vein thrombosis, lipedema, lymphoedema, spider veins, varicose veins, and venous leg ulcers and who have contracted Covid should especially take precaution,” Padayachy said.

## **HIV-TB mortality rates: SA needs to stem the tide**

*Health-E News | 11 March 2022*

Despite integrated interventions, the Centre for the Aids Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA), remains worried as South Africa's HIV-TB mortality rates continue to soar. CAPRISA, a global research organisation, released a study that demonstrated that the mortality benefit from health systems process improvements in real-world operational settings remains a challenge. It assessed the impact of quality improvement for HIV-TB integration on mortality within 40 primary healthcare clinics in SA between 2016 and 2018. Prof Kogieleum Naidoo, the study's primary author, said the mortality rates in those co-infected with HIV and TB, were still 'unacceptably high'. “We want to make sure that we are saving lives. So, while our goal was to show improvement in mortality, we didn't show an appreciable difference in mortality,” she said.

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## **TRAINING AND RESOURCES**

### **Subscribe to the Health Systems Trust Bulletin**

The Health Systems Trust (HST) produces a weekly bulletin on Fridays focusing on key public health news, peer-reviewed journal articles and other important primary healthcare resources.

### **Subscribe to the Health Systems Trust 60percent**

HST produces a weekly online publication, 60percent, which keeps subscribers abreast with the latest news and developments pertaining to HIV-related maternal, adolescent, child and youth health. The name 60percent signifies that southern Africa is responding to a feminised HIV/AIDS epidemic, with at least 60% of those living with HIV being women.

Subscribe to 60percent by simply visiting HST's website (<https://www.hst.org.za>), scroll to the bottom of the page, hit the SUBSCRIBE button, and follow the prompts. Let's keep you posted!

### **HSTi offers accredited and non-accredited short courses and full programmes**

The Health Systems Training Institute (HSTi) is the training arm of the Health Systems Trust (HST), a leading force in the South African public health sector. HST was established in 1992, on the brink of democracy in South Africa, and has since played a significant role in strengthening the national primary health system through health research, informatics, clinical support, capacity-building and training.

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## PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

### Obesity Atlas 2022

The 2022 Atlas, launched on World Obesity Day, presents projections for 2030 including the projected prevalence for obesity and severe obesity in men and women, and revisits 2030 projections for children. Furthermore, it presents current estimates for some of the consequences of obesity, namely the impact that high BMI has on the number of life-years lost to disease and early death (disease-adjusted life years, DALYs). The Atlas ends with scorecards for 200 countries globally, presenting the current estimates and projections for obesity, DALYs and preparedness. These serve as a wealth of knowledge, particularly for advocacy directed at policymakers who have the power to make a difference.

### Abortion care guideline

*World Health Organization | 8 March 2022*

The objective of this guideline is to present the complete set of all WHO recommendations and best practice statements relating to abortion. While legal, regulatory, policy and service-delivery contexts may vary from country to country, the recommendations and best practices described in this document aim to enable evidence-based decision-making with respect to quality abortion care.

### CDC | HIV Prevention Materials

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) are important tools for preventing HIV. The materials below contain information for health care providers and their patients about how to determine if PrEP or PEP should be prescribed. They also provide information on how to access, prescribe, use, and pay for PrEP and PEP.

### PEP for HIV Prevention: FAQs (A Guide for Health Care Providers)

PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) can be used to prevent HIV after a specific, high-risk exposure to HIV. By familiarizing yourself with PEP, you can help protect your patients from HIV.

### CDC on the Frontlines: Transforming the Global HIV Epidemic in the Midst of a Pandemic

Even in the face of a pandemic, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) continues to save millions of lives as a leader in the global response to the world's two deadliest infectious diseases – HIV and TB. As a key implementing agency of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), CDC is at the forefront of these global efforts to treat and prevent these diseases. CDC plays a unique role, bringing scientific know-how and on-the-ground expertise to bring about significant impact in the fight against these diseases. Just last year, our efforts accounted for more than 50 percent of all key\* PEPFAR outcomes to treat and prevent HIV and TB.

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## CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

### WHO Global Competency Standards for Refugee and Migrant Health Services – Strengthening the health workforce to provide quality health services to refugees and migrants

*Date: 16 December 2021*

*Time: 15:00*

Refugees and migrants may face a number of challenges to accessing health care, including language and cultural differences, institutional discrimination and restricted use of health services, which shape their interactions with the host country's health system and health workforce. The health workforce has a vital role in providing people-centred health services and building the resilience of health systems to respond to the health needs of refugees and migrants. This requires health workers with specific competencies.

Register here: [https://who.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_4-arcfhSTOS82XtgTvbIRg](https://who.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_4-arcfhSTOS82XtgTvbIRg)

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## JOB OPPORTUNITIES

### **Project Manager: CCPAC Project – HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING (HSS) UNIT**

Closing Date: 17 March 2022

### **District Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer**

Closing Date: 21 March 2022

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