

HST Bulletin\_12 August 2022

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## ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

### HIV prevention metrics: lessons to be learned from contraception

*Journal of the International AIDS Society* | 5 August 2022

*Maria Pyra, Renee Heffron, Jessica Haberer & James Kiarie*

As the range of effective HIV prevention options, including multiple biomedical tools, increases, there are many challenges to measuring HIV prevention efforts. In part, there is the challenge of varying prevention needs, between individuals as well as within individuals over time. The field of contraception faces many similar challenges, such as the range of prevention methods and changing contraceptive needs, and has developed many metrics for assessing contraceptive use at the program level, using frameworks that move beyond the HIV prevention cascade. We explore these similarities and differences between these two prevention fields and then discuss how each of these contraceptive metrics could be adapted to assessing HIV prevention.

### Advances in adjunct therapy against tuberculosis: Deciphering the emerging role of phytochemicals

*MedComm* | 5 August 2022

*Samreen Fatima, Anjna Kumari & Ved Dwivedi*

Eastern countries are a major source of medicinal plants, which set up a rich source of ethnopharmacologically known medicines used in the treatment of various diseases. These traditional medicines have been known as complementary, alternative, or nonconventional therapy across globe for ages. Tuberculosis (TB) poses a huge global burden and leads to maximum number of deaths due to an infectious agent. Treatment of TB using Directly Observed Treatment Short-course (DOTS) therapy comprises multiple antibiotics is quite lengthy and causes serious side-effects in different organs. The length of the TB treatment leads to withdrawal from the patients, which paves the way for the emergence of drug resistance in the bacterial population. These concerns related to therapy need serious and immediate interventions. Traditional medicines using phytochemicals has shown to provide tremendous potential in TB treatment, mainly in the eradication of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (M.tb), increasing natural immunity, and managing the side effects of anti-TB drugs. This review describes the antituberculosis potential of selected ethnopharmacologically important phytochemicals as potential

immune-modulator and as an adjunct-therapy in TB. This review will be a useful reference for researchers working on ethnopharmacology and will open the door for the discovery of novel agents as an adjunct-therapy to tuberculosis.

### **The Impact of a High School-Based Positive Youth Development Program on Sexual Health Outcomes: Results from a Randomized Controlled Trial**

*Journal of School Health* | 6 August 2022

Despite the promising overall reduction in teen births in the United States over the past 2 decades, geographical, racial, and ethnic disparities endure. Between 2007 and 2015, rural counties experienced the highest teen birth rates and slowest declines, when compared to more urban counties. And as of 2018, birth rates of Hispanic and Black teens were over double the birth rate of White teens. This is especially concerning as unintended teen pregnancy is linked to short- and long-term effects, such as increased high school dropout among teen parents and lower educational attainment for both teen parents and their children. To address the negative consequences associated with unplanned teen pregnancy, health officials and policymakers have prioritized the identification of effective teen pregnancy prevention (TPP) strategies. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) began conducting a systematic review of evaluation studies in 2009 to identify programs shown to be effective at reducing teen pregnancy, STIs, and other related behavioral risk factors, as well as gaps in the existing evidence base.

### **“I am alive because of her”: factors affecting adherence to combination antiretroviral therapy among people living with HIV in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa**

*BMC Infectious Diseases* | 8 August 2022

*Marian Loveday, Jennifer Furin, Sindisiwe Hlangu & Tasneem Naidoo*

In 2020, there were an estimated 37.7 million people living with HIV, all of whom could potentially experience healthy lifespans if they are started and maintained on effective combination antiretroviral treatment (cART). This will require testing and initiating on treatment an additional 12 million people as well as supporting the 25.7 million people on cART to be able to continue taking their therapy. In order to be effective, cART must be taken as part of a lifelong commitment through many different events, phases, and experiences. A significant body of literature exists on factors affecting adherence to HIV, with a heavy emphasis on individual-level factors that may contribute to challenges in taking cART as it is prescribed. While such understandings have been important in identifying and overcoming some challenges to adherence—including pill burden, adverse events, and lack of factual information about both HIV and cART—they often do not take into account social, contextual, and economic barriers to adherence.

### **Prevalence and factors associated with delayed antiretroviral therapy initiation among adults with HIV in Alebtong district, Northern Uganda: A facility-based study**

*PLOS Global Public Health* | 8 August 2022

Globally, an estimated 36.7 million people were living with HIV (PLWH) and of these, 2.1 million were newly infected and 1.1 million died of AIDS in 2015. By 2016, only 67% of adults eligible for ART were enrolled in ART in Uganda. Delayed ART initiation has been shown to contribute to the continued transmission of HIV as well as to higher morbidity and mortality among persons living with HIV. Our study examined the prevalence and factors associated with delayed ART initiation among adults with HIV in Alebtong district, Northern Uganda. A cross-sectional study involving 432 adults living with HIV was conducted between March and June 2018 in Alebtong district. Quantitative data were collected using interviewer-administered questionnaires and desk reviews using a data extraction tool. A binary logistic regression using a hierarchical modelling technique was used at the multivariable level to determine associations at a 95% confidence interval and  $p < 0.05$  using SPSS Statistics software version 23.0. Overall, 432 participants were enrolled in the study, of whom 18.1% (78/432) had delayed ART initiation. After final adjustment, our key findings showed a significantly lower odds of delayed ART initiation among older respondents (aOR = 0.35, 95% CI: 0.16–0.76); adherence to HIV clinic appointments, (aOR = 0.06, 95% CI: 0.02–0.15); and linkage to the HIV clinic the same day HIV test was conducted (aOR = 0.21, 95% CI: 0.08–0.55). However, a significantly higher odds of delayed ART initiation was observed among those whose cultures do not support the use of ART (aOR = 10.62, 95% CI: 3.04–32.08).

### **Could widespread use of antiviral treatment curb the COVID-19 pandemic? A modeling study**

*BMC Infectious Diseases | 9 August 2022*

*Laura Matrajt, Elizabeth Brown, Myron Cohen, Dobromir Dimitrov & Holly Janes*

With over 5 million deaths worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic has proven difficult to contain. Despite the development, advent, licensure, and rollout of many safe and effective vaccines, controlling SARS-CoV-2 transmission has shown to be elusive for several reasons, including vaccine supply shortages in low- and middle-income countries, vaccine hesitancy, and the emergence of new variants. Indeed, the Delta and Omicron variants, that emerged in summer and fall of 2021, quickly became the predominant strains and have caused large epidemic outbreaks, even in highly vaccinated regions. Rapidly producing such COVID-19 vaccines has been an amazing scientific endeavor, but effective tools to treat COVID-19 disease are still urgently needed. Monoclonal antibodies, antibody cocktails and antiretroviral treatments have been, and continue to be studied to treat SARS-CoV-2 infection and to prevent progression to severe disease.

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## RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

### **SAHPRA Confirms Fatality Linked To Covid-19 Vaccination**

*EWN | 5 August 2022*

South Africa has recorded a fatality linked to coronavirus vaccination. The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (Sahpra) made the announcement on Thursday morning. It said that the person died following immunisation with the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. Saphra said that due to patient confidentiality, no details regarding the case may be shared. The patient was diagnosed with Guillain-Barré Syndrome, also referred to as GBS, which is a rare disorder where the body's immune system damages the nervous system.

### **Africa: Covid-19 Vaccine Uptake 'Rising in Africa'**

*allAfrica | 5 August 2022*

The uptake of COVID-19 vaccines in Africa means that high-risk individuals are protected against severe infections and vaccine targets set by the World Health Organization will be reached, infectious disease specialists have said. While Africa is still lagging behind the rest of the world on COVID-19 vaccine access and uptake, the WHO says immunisation rates are improving. The World Health Assembly in May last year set a COVID-19 vaccine goal for countries to vaccinate at least ten per cent of their populations by 30 September, 2021. Only 15 African countries met this target, including Seychelles and Mauritius which have reached a 60 per cent vaccination rate.

### **In-depth: What are fuelling concerns over nurse training in South Africa?**

*Spotlight | 8 August 2022*

As previously reported by Spotlight, South Africa's nursing workforce is ageing and existing nurse shortages may well get worse rather than better in the coming years. Nurse shortages are a challenge globally and the need to train and sustainably employ more nurses is widely recognised. In South Africa, however, the training of nurses has been complicated by several changes in how nursing qualifications are regulated and approved.

### **Immunity for common cold coronaviruses may ward off severe covid-19**

*Imperial College London | 8 August 2022*

People with higher levels of T cells from common cold coronaviruses are less likely to become infected with SARS-CoV-2. A new study, published in Nature Communications and led by Imperial College London researchers, provides the first evidence of a protective role for these T cells. While previous studies have shown that T cells induced by other coronaviruses can recognise SARS-CoV-2, the new study examines for the first time how the presence of these T cells at the time of SARS-CoV-2 exposure influences whether someone becomes infected. The researchers also say their findings provide a blueprint for a second-generation, universal vaccine that could prevent infection from current and future SARS-CoV-2 variants, including Omicron.

### **NHI: Can SA afford national health insurance?**

*Health-e News | 8 August 2022*

While it remains unclear how much money will be required to finance the proposed National Health Insurance (NHI) nor where the funds will come from, a public health medicine specialist recommends that the government increase taxes raise funds in the interim. Prof Susan Goldstein, Deputy Director and COO at the SAMRC Centre for Health Economics and Decision Science-PRICELESS SA, believes taxes on alcohol, sugary beverages, and tobacco must be targeted.

### **Why is the International Aids Conference still held in the Global North?**

*Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism | 9 August 2022*

The world's largest Aids gathering – the International Aids Society's biannual International Aids Conference – should never be held in Europe or the US again, says Ayoade Alakija, co-chair of the African Union's African Vaccine Delivery Alliance, an organisation set up during the Covid-19 pandemic that works towards the equitable delivery of vaccines. Alakija was speaking in an interview on the first episode of Bhekisisa's new television show Health Beat. Most people with HIV live in the Global South, so that's where the gathering around the most important new HIV research should be held, she says. The Global South is a catch-all term for low- or middle-income nations, usually in Africa, Asia, Oceania, Latin America and the Caribbean.

### **90% of People Who Lose Sense of Smell or Taste from COVID-19 Regain It Within 2 Years**

*Healthline | 9 August 2022*

When COVID-19 hit, several primary symptoms were brought to our attention — including a loss of taste and smell. And it soon became clear that, for some, this symptom was lasting long after the infection had passed. Researchers have struggled to figure out how long it takes for these senses to return has been somewhat inconclusive. However, new research is now offering a more definite answer. The study Trusted Source, conducted by researchers in Italy and the UK, found that around 90 percent of mildly symptomatic COVID-19 patients who experienced a loss of taste or smell (or both) fully regained these senses within two years. The research follows previous studies Trusted Source conducted by the team, which began in 2020. In these, they monitored the same set of 119 COVID-19 patients who had reported a loss of smell or taste — and continued to assess the prevalence and intensity of their symptoms at four weeks, eight weeks, and six months post-infection.

### **New global alliance launched to end AIDS in children by 2030**

*Express Healthcare | 10 August 2022*

UNAIDS, UNICEF, WHO and partners have brought together a global alliance to ensure that no child living with HIV is denied treatment by the end of the decade and to prevent new infant HIV infections. Globally, only half (52 per cent) of children living with HIV are on life-saving treatment, far behind adults where three quarters (76 per cent) are receiving antiretrovirals, according to the data that has just been released in the UNAIDS Global AIDS Update 2022. Concerned by the stalling of progress for children, and the widening gap between children and adults, UNAIDS, UNICEF, WHO and partners have brought together a global alliance to ensure that no child living with HIV is denied treatment by the end of the decade and to prevent new infant HIV infections. The new Global Alliance for Ending AIDS in Children by 2030 was announced by leading figures at the International AIDS Conference taking place in Montreal, Canada.

### **New Study Confirms Typhoid Vaccine Safety, Immune Response in Children**

*CISION | 10 August 2022*

A new study, published in The Lancet Global Health, finds the typhoid conjugate vaccine, Typhbar TCV®, provides immunity for up to three years in children as young as nine months old in Malawi. The research – conducted by the Blantyre Malaria Project, Malawi-Liverpool-Wellcome Trust, and researchers at the Center for Vaccine Development and Global Health (CVD) at the University of Maryland School of Medicine (UMSOM) – found that the TCV vaccine is safe and well tolerated. Importantly, the vaccine can be given to nine-month-old infants at the same time as routine measles-rubella vaccinations without reducing the immune response to either vaccine. The newly published research is a double-blind, randomized, controlled clinical trial done in Blantyre, Malawi. The study team randomly assigned 631 children with no immunosuppression or chronic health conditions to either receive the TCV typhoid vaccine or a vaccine for meningococcal serogroup A conjugate, which is routinely used in Africa. The typhoid vaccine showed strong immune responses against typhoid in children ages nine months to 12

years old.

### **Factbox: Monkeypox cases and deaths around the world**

*GEO Health | 10 August 2022*

More than 80 countries where monkeypox is not endemic have reported outbreaks of the viral disease, which the World Health Organization has declared a global health emergency, as confirmed cases crossed 31,400 and non-endemic countries reported their first deaths. Below are the non-endemic countries that have reported monkeypox-related deaths.

### **Why am I so tired and when is it time to see the doctor about it? A GP explains**

*Health24 | 10 August 2022*

Everyone feels tired sometimes. But how do you know whether your tiredness is a problem worth seeing a doctor about? And with all the mental and emotional strain we have been under from the pandemic, isn't it just normal to feel tired? Tiredness is subjective; what's normal for one person won't be for the next. Many people see their GPs reporting tiredness (a recent study in Ireland found that it was present in 25% of patients). As a GP, my first question to someone who feels tired is: "how well can you function?". If tiredness is interfering with your everyday life and your ability to do what you like to do, it should be explored further.

### **Expert comment - polio vaccine for children aged one to nine in London**

*London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine | 10 August 2022*

Following the discovery of poliovirus in sewage in North and East London, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that a targeted inactivated polio vaccine (PIV) booster dose should be offered to all children between the ages of one and nine in all London boroughs. Dr Kathleen O'Reilly, Associate Professor in Statistics for Infectious Disease at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), and expert in polio eradication, said: "I think that the polio booster is a very good plan – sewage surveillance has provided us with information about poliovirus circulation and a critical opportunity to vaccinate children to prevent disease spread. In these investigations, poliovirus has been detected in several sewage samples from the north London area over a number of months.

### **Aspen to halt Covid-19 vaccine production as J&J orders dry up**

*News24 | 10 August 2022*

Aspen Pharmacare will stop making Covid-19 vaccines at its Gqeberha plant in South Africa from the end of this month due to a lack of orders, a senior executive said, further undermining Africa's already meagre capacity to produce doses. Aspen currently produces vaccines for Johnson & Johnson. In March, it struck a deal to produce, price, and sell its own-brand version of the shot for African markets. That deal was considered a game-changer for a continent frustrated by sluggish Western handouts. But, while only a fifth of adults in Africa are fully vaccinated, according to the African Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, demand for shots have failed to materialise.

### **Pandemics are not fate: Concrete actions to tackle inequalities can overcome AIDS, Monkeypox and COVID-19**

*UNAIDS | 10 August 2022*

We do not need to accept pandemics as fate, experts gathered at the International AIDS Conference concurred. By taking specific, well-evidenced, concrete actions to tackle the inequalities driving them, today's health threats can all be overcome. As the latest data reveals that progress in the HIV response is stalling, putting millions of lives in danger, as the COVID-19 crisis drags on, and as Monkeypox presents new risks, all are being held back by inequalities, and all three viruses are in turn further exacerbating those inequalities. However, a focus on tackling underlying drivers of pandemic risk can enable a successful response, scientists, economists and heads of AIDS programmes concurred. "There are Monkeypox vaccine doses in Europe but none in Africa. Most people at risk of dying from COVID-19 in lower-income countries have still not received a COVID-19 vaccine. New game changing prevention medicines for HIV will not be widely available in lower income counties for years unless there is a dramatic course correction," said Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director, UNAIDS, and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations.

## **Interim statement on COVID-19 vaccination for children**

*WHO | 11 August 2022*

WHO, with the support of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization and its COVID-19 Vaccines Working Group, is reviewing the emerging evidence on the need for and timing of vaccinating children and adolescents with the currently available COVID-19 vaccines, which have received Emergency Use Listing (EUL). SAGE is continuously reviewing the literature and has reached out to vaccine manufacturers, the research community and Member States to obtain the most complete and recent data on this issue. This interim statement was developed with additional support from the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group of Experts (STAGE) on maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health, and nutrition. This interim statement is not a policy recommendation. It examines the role of COVID-19 vaccines in children and adolescents in the global context of inequitable vaccine distribution and access across countries at a time when many countries have not yet achieved high vaccine coverage rates in the highest and high priority-use groups.

## **Food and drinks are getting sweeter. Even if it's not all sugar, it's bad for our health**

*Health-e News | 11 August 2022*

Humans have an evolutionary preference for sweetness. Sweet foods, like fruit and honey, were an important energy source for our ancestors. However, in the modern world, sweetened foods are readily available, very cheap and advertised extensively. Now, we are consuming too much sugar in foods and drinks – the kind that is added rather than sugar that is naturally occurring. Consuming too much added sugar is bad news for health. It is linked to obesity, type 2 diabetes and tooth decay. Because of these health concerns, manufacturers also started using non-nutritive sweeteners to sweeten food. These sweeteners contain little to no kilojoules and include both artificial sweeteners, such as aspartame and those that come from natural sources, such as stevia.

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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**

## **South African Health Review 2022 | Call for Abstracts**

South Africa's health systems strengthening efforts in pursuit of universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals have been greatly hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic. As first responders to the country's epidemic, healthcare workers found themselves facing a wide-range of

challenges that had a negative impact on both their ability to provide care and their mental health and well-being. Access to health care for chronic conditions, services for sexual and reproductive health, as well as testing, starting treatment, and continuity of care for HIV and TB, have all been compromised. As South Africa rebuilds its health system and transitions from the pandemic response to recovery, it is necessary to consider how to leverage our response to COVID-19 towards strengthening the health system for future pandemic preparedness.

The editorial team of the South African Health Review (SAHR) 2022 invites the submission of abstracts describing promising examples of response, mitigation, recovery and health systems strengthening strategies to rebuild the health system in wake of the country's COVID-19 response.

Closing Date: Monday, 15 August 2022

## South African Health Review 2021

*Health Systems Trust | 2021*

When it comes to service delivery and access in both the public and private health sectors, COVID-19 has put everything to the test. It has demonstrated how central public health security is to health and livelihoods, and how pandemic health emergencies expose the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of health systems, costing lives and causing immeasurable damage to economies. Few could have imagined the impact of COVID-19 when this pandemic reached our shores in March 2020.

This edition considers the government's and broader health sector's response to COVID-19, explores the current challenges facing the health system at this unprecedented time, and reflects on lessons learnt for future for public health emergencies. The chapters offer information on, inter alia, the challenges of balancing lives with livelihoods, and the impact of COVID-19 on different cadres of healthcare workers, especially Community Health Workers who found themselves at the forefront of our COVID-19 response. Other areas covered include the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations like children, persons with disabilities, farmworkers, migrants, and the poorest in our society.

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## CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

### World Health Organization | Consultation on the global oral health action plan

Date: 12 August – 16 September 2022

Web-based consultation

The resolution on oral health WHA74.5 requested WHO to translate the Global Strategy on Oral Health A75/10 Add.1 into an action plan for public oral health by 2023 and in consultation with Member States, including a framework for tracking progress with clear measurable targets of oral health to be achieved by 2030. In addition to the Global Strategy on Oral Health, the action plan will be aligned with the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2013–2030 and pillars 1 and 3 of WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work.

### World Health Organization | Storytelling for Infodemic Management Workshop Application

16 August – 12 September 2022

Through building storytelling skills, infodemic managers can become more effective communicators and explain to others the power of narratives that can mislead and cause harm online, talk about their infodemic management work and how stories can be used as a force for promoting public health. This is a free training for successful applicants who have been working in and responding to health misinformation, worked in the COVID-19 pandemic, and understand how information informs people's personal health decisions. Successful applicants will be invited to the workshop and encouraged to share and record their stories of how health misinformation and information overload have affected their lives either professionally or personally during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their stories will be featured in a community storytelling project of the WHO infodemic manager community.

## World Health Organization | Post COVID-19 Condition: Children and Young Persons

Date: 17 August 2022

Time: 13:30 – 15:30 CET

Over the past year, WHO has hosted a webinar series focused on the three “Rs”- recognition, research, and rehabilitation to advance the understanding of post COVID-19 condition. On 17 August 2022 from 13:30 – 15:30 CEST we will host our next webinar focused on post COVID-19 condition in children and young people. Despite acute SARS-CoV-2 infection in children and young people typically being milder or asymptomatic compared to adults, some experience or develop prolonged symptoms. It is important for us to understand the frequency, characteristics, and risk factors that lead to post COVID-19 condition in these populations of children and young people. More information is needed regarding presenting symptoms so there is better understanding and recognition of disease. Research from global patient cohorts to understand its natural history, pathophysiology, related sociopsychological causes and the different models of care is needed to help to improve the long-term outcomes of COVID-19 in children and young people with post COVID-19 condition.

## World Health Organization | World Patient Safety Day

Date: 17 September 2022

Medications are the most widely utilized interventions in health care, and medication-related harm constitutes the greatest proportion of the total preventable harm due to unsafe care, let alone the economic and psychological burden imposed by such harm. Acknowledging this substantial burden and recognizing the complexity of medication-related harm prevention and reduction, the theme of World Patient Safety Day 2022 is “Medication Safety”. The campaign is envisaged to provide the needed impetus to consolidate the efforts of the existing WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge: Medication Without Harm, emphasizing the need to adopt a systems approach and promote safe medication practices to prevent medication errors and reduce medication-related harm. Special consideration will be given to areas where most harm occurs. The key action areas are high-risk situations, transitions of care, and polypharmacy.

## PHASA (Public Health Association of South Africa) 17<sup>th</sup> annual public health conference

Date: 11 – 14 September

Location: Durban

Late Registration: 16 July – 26 Aug 2022

The Public Health Association of South (PHASA) invites you to attend their annual conference in Durban (eThekweni), on the east coast of South Africa. PHASA hosts an annual conferences, with the aim of engaging public health practitioners and interested people from around the country and world to share their experiences and research, discuss topical public health issues, and mentor public health students and young researchers. Hosting the national PHASA conference in Durban aims to add stimulus to the local economy, and contribute to enhanced awareness and widespread advocacy, for health, the social determinants of health, and healthcare in the region.

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## JOB OPPORTUNITIES

### HEALTH SYSTEMS RESEARCH (HSS) UNIT: Data Scientist

Closing date: 15 August 2022

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