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## ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

### **Determinants of health-related quality of life in young adults living with perinatally acquired HIV infection in Botswana**

*South African Journal of HIV Medicine | 29 April 2022*

*Grace Karugaba, Gloria Thupayagale-Tshweneagae, Mary M. Moleki, Onkabetse V. Mabikwa, Mogomotsi Matshaba*

Due to the successful antiretroviral therapy (ART) programme in Botswana, large numbers of perinatally HIV-infected adolescents are emerging into young adulthood. Young adulthood is a critical period of human development. However, there is lack of information on the factors affecting the health-related quality of life (HRQOL) of young adults living with perinatally acquired HIV (YALPH) in Botswana.

### **Levelling up HIV testing for the endgame**

*Lancet HIV | May Edition*

The UK has made incredible steps towards ending AIDS as a public health threat, being one of the first countries in the world to achieve UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets. In 2020, the **HIV Commission for England** recommended that to go the final mile in ending AIDS and HIV-related deaths and stopping HIV transmission by 2030, opt-out testing should be implemented across the health service. And in December, 2021, the UK Government set out its **Zero HIV Action plan**, in response to the HIV Commission, which included a commitment to supporting opt-out HIV testing in accident and emergency departments. It is welcome news that from April 1, emergency departments in Brighton, London, and Manchester are now providing opt-out HIV testing. But is the selective and patchy implementation enough? Particularly for a government elected, in part, on a promise to provide equality of opportunity and services across the nation, referred to in political circles as levelling up.

### **HIV and COVID-19: juxtaposition of two pandemics**

*Lancet HIV | John Nkengasong*

At the individual level, the COVID-19 pandemic has important implications for people living with HIV and has affected the delivery of HIV services. In this issue of *The Lancet HIV*, two remarkable studies assess the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination in HIV-positive individuals.

### **The complexity of neuropsychiatric manifestations of COVID-19 in South Africa**

*South African Medical Journal | May 2022 issue*

*S Fernandes, N Marques, L Goga*

SARS-CoV-2 was first identified in Wuhan City, China, in 2019. Initially it was associated with the development of pulmonary disease, but research over the past 2 years has identified effects on multiple systems. Neuropsychiatric manifestations of COVID-19 have been reported in countries around the world, including new-onset psychosis in patients with no personal or family psychiatric history. We present the first case series describing neuropsychiatric manifestations of patients in Johannesburg, South Africa (SA). All four patients presented with their index-episode psychosis, and evidence of COVID-19 infection. The patients had varied psychiatric presentations, from delirium and psychosis to mania, and all responded well to low doses of antipsychotics. One patient had newly diagnosed HIV in addition to COVID-19. Further research is needed to determine the prevalence of neuropsychiatric manifestations in acute SARS-CoV-2 infections in SA.

## **Is it time to include older adults in inflammatory bowel disease trials? A call for action**

*The Lancet Health Longevity | 1 May 2022*

*Sophie Vieujean, Bénédicte Caron, Prof Vipul Jairath, Prof Athanase Benetos, Prof Silvio Danese, et al.*

The therapeutic management of older patients with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is challenging, particularly because of the absence of evidence-based guidelines for these patients, who seem to frequently be excluded from clinical trials. In this systematic review we investigated the exclusion of older patients with IBD from phase 3 studies registered on PubMed and ClinicalTrials.gov, by assessing the upper limit of age exclusion criteria and the percentage of patients older than 65 years included in the trials. Exclusion criteria other than age were also recorded, and comorbidities were analysed separately. Our review of 222 phase 3 studies shows that older patients are frequently excluded from IBD clinical trials because of their age, which was used as an exclusion criterion in 129 (58%) of the 222 assessed trials. Of the 32 trials that detailed the percentage of included patients who were 65 years or older, only 763 (5.4%) patients of the 14 124 patients included were older than 65 years. In addition to age, patients were also excluded because of comorbidities (mainly renal, hepatic, and cardiovascular, and used as an exclusion criterion in 76% of trials), a history of dysplasia (45% of trials), and previous treatment for IBD (19% of trials). We propose a three-step process that should enable the inclusion of all older patients in IBD clinical trials, regardless of their age, comorbidities, and frailty.

## **Management of menopause: a view towards prevention**

*The Lancet Diabetes and Endocrinology | 5 May 2022*

*Prof Roger Lobo, Prof Anne Gompel, et al.*

Women spend approximately one-third of their lives with menopause, which occurs around 50 years of age. It is now appreciated that several important metabolic and cardiovascular disease risks emerge during the menopausal transition. Many important conditions occur 10–15 years after menopause, including weight gain and obesity, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, osteoporosis, arthritis, cardiovascular disease, dementia, and cancer; therefore, the occurrence of menopause heralds an important opportunity to institute preventative strategies. These strategies will lead to improved quality of life and decreased mortality. Various strategies are presented for treating symptoms of menopause and diseases that are asymptomatic. Among several strategies is the use of hormone therapy, which has efficacy for symptoms and osteoporosis, and can improve metabolic and cardiovascular health. When instituted early, which is key, in younger postmenopausal women (under 60 years) oestrogen has been found to consistently decrease mortality with a favourable risk–benefit profile in low-risk women. Prospective data show that long-term therapy might not be required for this benefit.

## **Menopause: a turning point for women's health**

*The Lancet Diabetes and Endocrinology | 5 May 2022*

*Editorial*

Rising demand for menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) in the UK has resulted in **shortages of some products**, as suppliers struggle to keep up with demand. A consequence of increasing awareness of menopause symptoms and treatment options among women, prescriptions for MHT in England have doubled in the past 5 years to more than 500 000 a month. Used to alleviate distressing vasomotor symptoms, genitourinary syndrome of menopause, and postmenopausal osteoporosis, MHT can also help minimise disruptions to work and quality of life. In response to an outpouring of anger from women affected by the MHT shortages, on April 29, the UK Government announced the **formation of a new**

**taskforce** to address the supply chain issues.

## **COVID-19: the next phase and beyond**

*The Lancet* | 7 May 2022

*Editorial*

After living for more than 2 years with COVID-19—with over 6·2 million confirmed deaths (but probably many more, with an estimated 20 million excess deaths) and over 510 million confirmed cases—the world is at a critical point. The omicron wave, with its high transmissibility and milder course than previous variants, especially for people who are fully vaccinated and without comorbidities, is abating in many countries. Restrictions are being relaxed, and people are slowly returning to pre-pandemic activities, including gatherings, office-based working, and cultural events. Mask mandates are being lifted in many countries. Testing and surveillance have decreased and travelling is recommencing widely. People are understandably exhausted and want to forget about the pandemic. This would be a grave mistake.

## **Adverse Mentions, Negative Sentiment, and Emotions in COVID-19 Vaccine Tweets and Their Association with Vaccination Uptake: Global Comparison of 192 Countries**

*MDPI* | 8 May 2022

*Jungmi Jun, Ali Zain, Yingying Chen, Sei-Hill Kim*

Many countries show low COVID-19 vaccination rates despite high levels of readiness and delivery of vaccines. The public's misperceptions, hesitancy, and negative emotions toward vaccines are psychological factors discouraging vaccination. At the individual level, studies have revealed negative perceptual/behavioral outcomes of COVID-19 information exposure via social media where misinformation and vaccine fear flood. Objective: This study extends research context to the global level and investigates social media discourse on the COVID-19 vaccine and its association with vaccination rates of 192 countries in the world. Methods: COVID-19 vaccine tweets were compared by country in terms of the number per million Twitter users, mentions of adverse events—death, side-effects, blood clots, negative sentiment (vs. positive), and fear, sadness, or anger emotions (vs. joy). Artificial intelligence (AI) was adopted to classify sentiment and emotions. Such tweets and covariates (COVID-19 morbidity and mortality rates, GDP, population size and density, literacy rate, democracy index, institutional quality, human development index) were tested as predictors of vaccination rates in countries.

## **Urban design, transport, and health**

*The Lancet Global Health* | 10 May 2022

*Executive Summary*

Good city planning produces co-benefits for individual and planetary health and wellbeing. In 2016, the Lancet Series on urban design, transport, and health drew attention to the importance of integrated upstream city planning policies as a pathway to creating healthy and sustainable cities, and proposed a set of city planning indicators that could be used to benchmark and monitor progress. In this follow-up series, the authors show how the indicators can guide decisions about what must change in order to create healthy and sustainable cities and how research can be used to guide urban policy to achieve urban and population health. They provide tools that other cities can use to replicate the indicators, and explore “where to next” to create healthy and sustainable cities, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.

## **The problem of antimicrobial resistance in chronic liver disease**

*The Lancet Gastroenterology & Hepatology* | June 2022

*Editorial*

In 2019, an estimated 1·27 million individuals died due to bacterial antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Beyond the obvious threat to global public health, AMR also threatens global development—even the most optimistic scenario modelled by the World Bank in 2017 estimates that AMR will reduce annual global GDP by 1·1% by 2050, with the GDP shortfall exceeding \$1 trillion every year after 2030. Against this backdrop, investment in the development of new antibiotics falls far short of that required. A 2020 report from WHO concluded that although 11 new antibacterial agents had received regulatory approval since 2017, many of the new agents had limited clinical benefit over existing treatment: nine were from existing classes for which resistance mechanisms are well established and for which rapid emergence of resistance can be foreseen. At the time of the report, only 43 new antibiotics with a new therapeutic entity were in clinical development; of these, 26 targeted WHO priority pathogens, and just two targeted key

multidrug-resistant Gram-negative bacteria.

## **Predictors and consequences of HIV status disclosure to adolescents living with HIV in Eastern Cape, South Africa: a prospective cohort study**

*Journal of the International AIDS Society* | 11 May 2022

Olanrewaju Edun, **Yulia Shenderovich**, **Siyanai Zhou**, **Elona Toska**, **Lucy Okell**, **Jeffrey W. Eaton** et al.

The World Health Organization recommends full disclosure of HIV-positive status to adolescents who acquired HIV perinatally (APHIV) by age 12. However, even among adolescents (aged 10–19) already on antiretroviral therapy (ART), disclosure rates are low. Caregivers often report the child being too young and fear of disclosure worsening adolescents' mental health as reasons for non-disclosure. We aimed to identify the predictors of disclosure and the association of disclosure with adherence, viral suppression and mental health outcomes among adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa.

## **Evaluation of mRNA-1273 Covid-19 Vaccine in Children 6 to 11 Years of Age**

*New England Journal of Medicine* | 11 May 2022

C. Buddy Creech, Evan Anderson, Vladimir Berthaud, Inci Yildirim, Andrew Atz, et al.

The Coronavirus Efficacy (COVE) and Teen COVE trials<sup>1-3</sup> showed that the mRNA-1273 vaccine (Moderna) had mainly low-grade transient adverse effects and high efficacy in preventing symptomatic coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) in persons who were 12 years of age or older, and mRNA-1273 is approved for vaccination of adults in the United States. Although the highest risk of illness and death from Covid-19 occurs among older adults and populations with underlying coexisting conditions,<sup>4</sup> children are at risk for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection that can lead to severe Covid-19–related outcomes, including hospitalization, the use of life-supporting interventions, and death.<sup>5,6</sup> The burden of Covid-19 in children extends to social issues such as school interruptions and other life disruptions that may result in long-term consequences for academic development and well-being.<sup>7</sup> Complications of SARS-CoV-2 infection in children and adolescents can include the development of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) and sequelae such as long Covid-19<sup>8-10</sup>; these outcomes indicate a compelling need to protect children through vaccination.

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## **RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS**

### **SA's new Covid-19 rules: Masks stay on until the minister of health says otherwise**

*Business Insider* | 5 May 2022

Masks are still required in publicly-accessible buildings and on public transport, after a late-night update to Covid-19 rules on Wednesday. Now it will be up to the minister of health to decree when masks are no longer needed – and to re-impose the mask mandate at any point after that. Health minister Joe Phaahla published amendments to health regulations on Wednesday night, just hours before a 30-day set of transitional rules – put in place after the end of the national state of disaster on Covid-19 – automatically lapsed.

### **Editorial: How do we make an HIV and TB plan that has greater impact?**

*Spotlight* | 5 May 2022

There is good reason to be sceptical about the link between healthcare policy and implementation in South Africa. Policies such as those on mental health and palliative care, for example, may be good on paper but have generally gone unimplemented. The Competition Commission's Health Market Inquiry is arguably one of the most impressive and thorough investigations into a set of healthcare issues in recent years but most of the HMI report's recommendations are gathering dust. When it comes to HIV and TB there is also a disconnect but of a different type. Government is clearly doing a lot of work on HIV and TB – some very good, some less so. On the whole, though, decisions appear to be made in parallel with, rather than guided by the relevant policies.

### **UNAIDS warmly welcomes the confirmation of John Nkengasong to lead the United States global efforts to end AIDS**

*UNAIDS* | 6 May 2022

UNAIDS warmly congratulates John Nkengasong on confirmation by the U.S. Senate as Ambassador-at-Large and Coordinator of United States Government Activities to Combat HIV/AIDS Globally. As the new U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, Dr Nkengasong will lead the United States' President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). "This is great news for the world. John Nkengasong is an inspired choice to lead PEPFAR," said Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "He is one of the world's leading experts on HIV and pandemic preparedness and has practical experience on how to advance efforts to end AIDS amidst the COVID pandemic. We need the kind of bold thinking and commitment that he has brought throughout his career. It will be a true honour to work with him in his new role, supporting continued United States leadership on HIV, and strengthening the life-saving partnership between the UNAIDS Joint Programme and PEPFAR." An HIV virologist with more than three decades of experience in the global HIV response, Dr Nkengasong's work on COVID-19 in his most recent highly acclaimed role as the founding director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention has been internationally recognized.

## **WHO launches first ever global report on infection prevention and control**

*World Health Organization | 6 May 2022*

The COVID-19 pandemic and other recent large disease outbreaks have highlighted the extent to which health care settings can contribute to the spread of infections, harming patients, health workers and visitors, if insufficient attention is paid to infection prevention and control (IPC). But a new report from the World Health Organization (WHO) shows that where good hand hygiene and other cost-effective practices are followed, 70% of those infections can be prevented. Today, out of every 100 patients in acute-care hospitals, seven patients in high-income countries and 15 patients in low- and middle-income countries will acquire at least one health care-associated infection (HAI) during their hospital stay. On average, 1 in every 10 affected patients will die from their HAI. People in intensive care and newborns are particularly at risk. And the report reveals that approximately one in four hospital-treated sepsis cases and almost half of all cases of sepsis with organ dysfunction treated in adult intensive-care units are health care-associated.

<https://www.who.int/news/item/06-05-2022-who-launches-first-ever-global-report-on-infection-prevention-and-control>

### **Opinion: COVID-19 has been hard on kids, more support is needed**

*Spotlight | 6 May 2022*

As with most children, life changed dramatically for my daughter from being in daycare one day to staying at home during South Africa's multiple stages of COVID-19-related lockdown. There were many questions. "Why do I have to wash my hands so much?" she would ask. "So, we can be healthy and not get the bad flu," I would answer. "When can I go back to school?" was another daily question. "When the bad flu is not making everyone sick anymore," I would answer, but like most children, she did not seem to understand why we were unable to go anywhere.

## **New Covid-19 variant is spreading faster than expected, health expert warns as fifth wave begins**

*IOL | 9 May 2022*

As Covid-19 cases continue to rise steadily in the country and the fifth wave has begun, a health expert at UKZN says the new variant is spreading faster than Omicron. In the past 24 hours, the country recorded a 25% positivity rate in infections. More than 50% of the 5 486 cases were recorded in Gauteng.

## **In-depth: Risk to newborns increasing as antibiotics stop working**

*Spotlight | 9 May 2022*

The number of newborn babies dying from neonatal sepsis is rising as the antibiotics used to treat them are not working effectively, a landmark international study has found. Neonatal sepsis is a life-threatening bloodstream infection that affects up to three million babies a year globally. The Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership (GARDP) and partners recently released their findings showing that antibiotic resistance to bacterial infections, and the increased use of broader-spectrum antibiotics have led to high levels of mortality and neurodevelopmental problems in surviving babies. Babies are especially vulnerable to infections because of their underdeveloped immune systems, says Sally Ellis, Children's Antibiotics Project Leader for GARDP. "Compounding the problem is that babies are dying because of the lack of good treatment options."

## **SA figures indicate hundreds of reinfections — Covid cases climb by 3,237**

*Daily Maverick | 9 May 2022*

South Africa had registered 3,237 new Covid cases on Monday, according to the latest update from the National Institute for Communicable Diseases. This increase represents an 18.7% positivity rate, Sinehlanhla Jimoh from the NICD said. Most new cases were from Gauteng (52%) followed by KwaZulu-Natal (20%). The Western Cape accounted for 11% and the Eastern Cape and Free State each accounted for 5%. Mpumalanga, North West and Northern Cape each accounted for 2% while Limpopo accounted for 1%. The NICD update said that 427 of these cases were possible reinfections in people who had had Covid before. South African scientists, led by Prof Alex Sigal from the Africa Health Research Institute, had proven — using blood plasma from volunteers — that reinfection with the two Omicron sub-variants, BA.4 and BA.5, was possible, but less likely in vaccinated people.

### **Charlotte Maxeke hospital casualty unit open, but not for 'walk-in' emergencies**

*Daily Maverick | 9 May 2022*

Abig-guns walkabout announced the reopening of the casualty unit at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital (CMJAH) on Monday. Health Minister Dr Joe Phaahla, with a senior-level entourage from the national government and Gauteng provincial government, announced this “key milestone” reopening, but he also said the hospital's critical trauma and emergency unit remained closed to “walk-in” emergency patients.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-05-09-charlotte-maxeke-hospital-casualty-unit-open-but-not-for-walk-in-emergencies/>

### **WHO highlights glaring gaps in regulation of alcohol marketing across borders**

*World Health Organization | 10 May 2022*

A new report from the World Health Organization highlights the increasing use of sophisticated online marketing techniques for alcohol and the need for more effective regulation. It shows that young people and heavy drinkers are increasingly targeted by alcohol advertising, often to the detriment of their health. Reducing the harm from alcohol — by regulating cross-border alcohol marketing, advertising and promotion is the first report from WHO to detail the full extent of the way that alcohol is today being marketed across national borders — often by digital means — and in many cases regardless of the social, economic or cultural environment in receiving countries. Worldwide, 3 million people die each year as a result of harmful use of alcohol — one every 10 seconds — representing about 5% of all deaths. A disproportionate number of these alcohol--related deaths occur among younger people, with 13.5% of all deaths among those who are 20–39 years of age being alcohol-related.

### **It's not one size fits all: a case for how equity-based knowledge translation can support rural and remote communities to optimize virtual health care**

*Rural and Remote Health | 9 May 2022*

*Emily Giroux, Meaghan Hagerty, Alanna Shwed, Nicole Pal, Ngoc Huynh, et al*

People living in rural and remote British Columbia (BC) in Canada experience complex barriers to care, resulting in poorer health outcomes compared to their urban counterparts. Virtual healthcare (VH) can act as a tool to address some of the care barriers, including reducing travel time, cost, and disruptions to people's lives. Conversely, VH can exacerbate inequities through unique difficulties in rural implementation, such as a lack of access to necessary infrastructure (eg internet), social supports, and technological capacity (eg devices and literacy).

### **Covid-19 SA: Low vaccination, sub-variants drive infections in kids**

*Health-E News | 10 May 2022*

Low vaccination rates and the highly transmissible Omicron sub-variant are behind the recent jump in COVID-19 infections amongst children between 10 and 14-years-old. In week 17 this age group represented 34.2 percent of all infections in South Africa. Public Health Specialist Lead of the National Covid Hospital Surveillance at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) Dr. Waasila Jassat said children have a lower vaccination coverage compared to adults. “That could also contribute to the difference. There could also be characteristics of the new variants that make them more likely to affect children (compared to earlier variants) in terms of the receptors which they bind in the airways,” said Dr. Jassat.

<https://health-e.org.za/2022/05/10/covid-19-sa-low-vaccination-sub-variants-drive-infections-in-kids/>

**Covid-19 in wastewater data now available to the public**

*The Citizen | 10 May 2022*

The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) said regardless of whether or not they are symptomatic, people infected with Covid-19 can shed the virus in their faeces. The NICD said global experience is showing that the levels the coronavirus in wastewater reflect the burden of disease in the community. Variants of Covid-19 can be identified in wastewater through detection of single-nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) that are specific to each variant. SARS-CoV-2 is shed from symptomatic and asymptomatic persons in stool but is not transmitted by the faecal-oral route nor via wastewater. The NICD recently launched a dashboard that enables the public to access surveillance data concerning Covid-19 detection in wastewater in South Africa.

### **World leaders urged to make firm commitments at Second Global COVID-19 Summit by ACT-Accelerator agency leads**

*World Health Organization | 10 May 2022*

This week, world leaders will gather to consider crucial next steps in the global COVID-19 response. We applaud the co-hosts of the Second Global COVID-19 Summit – the United States, Belize, Germany, Indonesia and Senegal – for bringing together governments from across the globe to make concrete commitments to vaccinate the world, save lives now and build better health security. Recent WHO estimates show the death toll associated with COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021 was just under 15 million, a sobering reminder of the human cost of this pandemic. With reported cases falling globally, it is tempting – but misguided – to think the crisis is over. This is the moment to intensify efforts, not to ease off. This summit gives leaders the opportunity to write the closing chapters of the pandemic – an opportunity they cannot afford to miss.

### **70% of South Africa has come into contact with Covid – and have some form of immunity: health minister**

*Business Tech | 10 May 2022*

Health minister, Dr Joe Phaahla, says while 70% of the population has come into contact with Covid-19 – and have some form of immunity – the best form of defense against the disease remains vaccination. Phaahla said this when he tabled the department's budget vote before a mini-plenary of the National Assembly on Tuesday. "Whilst it is the time that over 70% of the population have had contact with the virus, and therefore we have some natural immunity, the truth is this immunity wares with time and it cannot be boosted. So, while the virus is amongst us, the best defense is vaccination," he said.

### **Pig-human transplants may be a misguided attempt to address the organ shortage**

*Medical Xpress | 11 May 2022*

At the end of 2021, 57-year old David Bennett Sr. was bedridden and on life-support with irreversible heart failure. He was not eligible for a human heart transplant or an implanted mechanical heart pump because of his underlying health condition and, allegedly, "a history of disregarding medical advice." Certain death was on the horizon and this fatal prognosis made Bennett a candidate for a highly experimental and never-before-attempted surgical procedure involving the transplantation of a heart from a genetically modified pig. The pig-to-human cardiac transplant—or xenotransplant—was authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on compassionate grounds on New Year's Eve 2021 and the surgery was performed on Jan. 7, 2022.

### **Too many people still die from asthma - doctor weighs in on the new way forward and how it's reducing risks**

*Health24 | 11 May 2022*

Asthma is an inflammatory respiratory condition of the airways and affects about 262-million people globally. In South Africa, more than 20% of children and 10-15% of adults have asthma. For those living with the illness it can reduce quality of life in varying degrees and it's not uncommon to be hospitalised during an attack. In 2019 alone, 461 000 people succumbed to the illness. This despite the fact that there are evidenced-based medications to treat the condition. Clearly fundamental changes are needed to reduce avoidable asthma deaths and the new global GINA\* treatment guidelines are expected to do just that. Read on to learn more from Johannesburg-based GP, Dr Marlin McKay who shares what has to be done to achieve better control and explains the new treatment strategies that are being followed to reduce risks and attacks.

## **What Is Omicron's Future? And Will the Delta Variant Stage a Comeback?**

*The Wire Science | 11 May 2022*

The second COVID-19 wave, driven by the spread of the delta variant of the novel coronavirus, wreaked widespread devastation in India and triggered panic in the social and health services. The third wave, driven by the omicron variant, was relatively milder even though it caused a great many number of infections. Its presumed mildness, owed no doubt to its intrinsically less virulent nature, was also aided by the then-widespread vaccine-acquired, natural and hybrid immunity. Both natural and vaccine-acquired exposure offer some protection against severe disease and death, but to different extents. However, Hong Kong, China, South Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan and other countries found that the omicron variant was probably not as mild as many believed it to be. Recent reports from Hong Kong said that the BA.2 sub-variant invokes a risk of death similar to previous strains of the virus. This is contrary to perceptions in other parts of the world, that the omicron variant is less severe. There are also indications that the omicron variant is as dangerous in terms of long-term complications in children as the delta variant – especially in the US. Nonetheless, the omicron variant's presumed mildness has encouraged many countries and their people to become complacent.

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## **PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS**

### **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.

### **NICD South Africa Field Epidemiology Training Programme Call for applicants for 2023 intake**

The South African Field Epidemiology Training Programme (SAFETP) is now accepting applications for the 2023 intake, from qualified health professionals with interest in public health and commitment to public service. Field Epidemiology Training Programmes (FETPs) have been established in many countries around the world to provide training and develop competencies that are essential for effective disease detection, investigation, control, and prevention, with a goal of enhancing the health security of communities. FETP trainees spend minimum time in the classroom (less than 25% of the training time) and maximum time in the field, where they develop practical skills to collect, analyze, and use data to address priority public health issues and inform policy decisions.

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## **CONFERENCES AND EVENTS**

### **World Health Organization webinar on ICD-11 implementation strategy and country experiences**

The Classifications and Terminologies Unit is organising this webinar as part of WHO ICD-11 webinar series.

Date: 16 May 2022



Time: 12:00 – 13:00 UTC Time

## **Global Report on Assistive Technology (GReAT) Launch**

Date: 16 May 2022

Time: 15:00 – 16:00 CET

The World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) invite you to join the virtual launch of the first Global Report on Assistive Technology (GReAT) on Monday, 16 May 2022 from 15:00 to 16:00 CET (Geneva). The GReAT report was developed in response to the World Health Assembly resolution WHA71.8 on improving access to assistive technology adopted in May 2018. The global impact of the WHO-UNICEF Global Report on Assistive Technology will be unprecedented. The Global Report recognizes enabling environments and AT as a precondition for people in need to realize their human rights, and shares evidence-based best practice examples and 10 key actionable recommendations on improving access to assistive technology, for everyone, everywhere.

## **Medication Safety Webinar series: Medication Safety in High-risk Situations**

Date: 17 May 2022

Time: 13:00 – 14:30 CET

Unsafe medication practices and medication errors are a leading cause of injury and avoidable harm in health care systems across the world. WHO Patient Safety Flagship has initiated a series of monthly webinars on the topic of "WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge: Medication Without Harm",. The main objective of the webinar series is support implementation of this WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge: Medication Without Harm at the country level. Considering the huge burden of medication-related harm, Medication Safety has also been selected as the theme for World Patient Safety Day 2022.

## **WHO Informal Consultation with People Living with Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health Conditions in the European Region**

Date: 18 – 19 May 2022

Time: 13:00- 16:00 CET

The World Health Organization (WHO) is developing a Framework for Meaningful Engagement of People Living with NCDs (PLWNCDs) and Mental Health Conditions (MHCs) that will guide WHO and Member States in the meaningful engagement of PLWNCDs and MHCs in co-designing NCD and MHC policies, programmes, and principles.

## **Hybrid event: Building momentum on reducing unhealthy diets and NCD prevention: Investments, solutions and best practice**

Date: 24 May 2022

Time: 17:30 – 19:00 (CEST) followed by a reception at the venue.

Place: Geneva Press Club, Chemin de l'Impératrice 18, 1292 Pregny-Chambésy, Switzerland.

Unhealthy diets and the resulting malnutrition are one of the most serious current global challenges for public health, economic development and environmental sustainability. More and more countries are faced with the double burden of malnutrition where undernutrition coexists alongside overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs). This challenge is affecting countries at all levels of wealth and development, with marginalized groups from lower economic sectors being most affected. Join us in this event organized by NCD Alliance, Vital Strategies, NCD Child and World Obesity Federation on the sidelines of the 75th session of the World Health Assembly. We will discuss with a panel of experts the investment case of existing solutions to promote healthier diets and advance NCD prevention. For those who will not attend in-person, you may follow this event via Zoom. Please RSVP for onsite or online participation.

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## **JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Psychosocial Advisor – DO ART Project: HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING (HSS) UNIT**

Closing Date: 2022-05-19

**Professional Nurse Clinician – DO ART Project: HEALTH SYSTEMS  
STRENGTHENING (HSS) UNIT**

Closing Date: 2022-05-19

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