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ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

Global access to existing and future antimicrobials and diagnostics: antimicrobial subscription and pooled procurement

The Lancet Global Health | 13 December 2021

Daniel Berman, Sujith Chandy, Oliver Cansdell, Krishnee Moodley, Balaji Veeraraghavan, et al.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the importance of an efficient and equitable supply of and access to essential health products. These factors are equally pertinent to the antimicrobial resistance pandemic, in which access to a portfolio of existing and pipeline antimicrobials plus complementary diagnostics is crucial. This Viewpoint focuses on market shaping in low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs), where the need for effective antimicrobials and complementary diagnostics is most acute. We propose the creation of a subscription and pooled procurement model that consolidates the growing demand for a portfolio of antimicrobials and diagnostics in LMICs. Anchored by regional market leaders, these pooling mechanisms would guarantee consistent private-sector and public-sector access in participating countries, while creating conditions for long-term best practice in stewardship. Supported by data from South Africa and India, this proposal sets out an innovative approach to tackle the antimicrobial resistance crisis in LMICs.

The effect of mandatory COVID-19 certificates on vaccine uptake: synthetic-control modelling of six countries

The Lancet Public Health | 13 December 2021

Melinda Mills, Tobias Rüttenauer

Some countries have either introduced or are considering mandatory COVID-19 certification using proof of at least two doses of an approved vaccine, negative test (usually in the past 48 h), or recovery certificate to show recent natural infection (usually within the past 6 months; eg, RT-PCR or antigen test). Certification has been introduced for international travel, and, in domestic contexts, managing entry into settings such as nightclubs, large events, hospitals, gyms, or indoor hospitality (appendix p 3). Several media reports have linked certification to increased vaccine uptake, yet evidence remains anecdotal. Self-reported surveys suggest certification reduces vaccine intentions, and a systematic review concluded that the quality and quantity of studies was low, with a lack of conclusive evidence on whether certification would affect vaccine uptake.

COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in Africa: a call to action

The Lancet Global Health | 20 December 2021

Polydor Mutombo, Mosoka Falla, Davison Munodawafa, Ahmed Kabel, David Houeto, et al.

In addition to low COVID-19 vaccine coverage in Africa due to vaccine nationalism and vaccine diplomacy, the gradual effort to distribute COVID-19 vaccines to low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs) is threatened by vaccine hesitancy. In Africa in particular, the low vaccine coverage and the ubiquitous vaccine hesitancy in a concerning proportion of the population undermine efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. We advocate for humane, culturally relevant, and rapid public health action to address these issues. Vaccine hesitancy in LMICs is due to a dearth of knowledge about the fact that vaccines are the most effective public health interventions, and have reduced significantly the burden, morbidity, and mortality of communicable diseases. There are also historical, structural, and other systemic dynamics that underpin vaccine hesitancy among people who recognise the public health importance of immunisation.

Impact of using creative arts programming to support HIV treatment in adolescents and young adults in Eswatini

AIDS Research and Therapy | 20 December 2021

Tara Ness, Vedika Agrawal, Danielle Guffey, Amanda Small, Tandzile Simelane, et al.

In 2018, approximately 1.6 million adolescents (aged 10–19) were living with HIV worldwide, with the highest HIV prevalence found in Eswatini. Adolescents and young adults living with HIV are a vulnerable population due to unique psychosocial challenges that come with having a stigmatizing disease. This group struggles more than other age-groups with medication adherence and requires novel approaches to supporting treatment, including peer-group encouragement, and self-expression.

Impact of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on routine immunisation services: evidence of disruption and recovery from 170 countries and territories

The Lancet Global Health | 21 December 2021

Anita Shet, Kelly Carr, Carolina Danovaro-Holliday, Samir Sodha, Christine Prospero, et al.

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has scarcely left any corner of the world untouched, with millions of lives lost as a direct result of the virus. Equally important are the indirect effects of the pandemic. Disruptions of routine health services are likely to increase morbidity and mortality, leaving women and children particularly vulnerable. Systems for routine childhood immunisation have been greatly impacted globally, and in May, 2020, WHO announced there were at least 80 million children younger than 1 year of age who were at risk of missing life-saving vaccinations. Pandemic-related disturbances have jeopardised previous gains in immunisation services, with major implications on vaccine-preventable disease eradication and elimination efforts. Immense challenges abound in obtaining accurate and systematic measurements of these changes in immunisation status globally.

Additive Manufacturing Interventions during the COVID-19 Pandemic: South Africa

MDPI | 29 December 2021

Thywill Dzogbewu, Sampson Afrifa Jnr, Nathaniel Amoah, Samuel Fianko, Deon de Beer

Additive manufacturing (AM), also known as 3D printing, is considered a renaissance of the manufacturing industry. Its unique capability of manufacturing 3D objects with intricate geometrical configurations has been used to produce hospital equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE) in an attempt to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. The technology has been used by different research units to produce ventilators, respirator face masks, oscillating respiratory devices, oxygen connectors, oxygen splitters, non-invasive ventilation helmets, reusable clinician PPE, visor frames for face shields, etc. Despite the efforts of the AM community in South Africa, COVID-19 infections have continued to increase in the country. It came to light that technological interventions (including AM) alone cannot prevent the spread of the virus without the corresponding adaptive behavioural changes, such as adhering to COVID-19 prevention protocols (washing of hands, social distancing, etc.). It could be postulated that the spread of COVID-19 can only be prevented by inter-marrying the technological interventions (AM) with adaptive behavioural changes.

HIV-Associated Tuberculosis in Children and Adolescents: Evolving Epidemiology, Screening, Prevention and Management Strategies

MDPI | 29 December 2021

Alexander Kay, Helena Rabie, Elizabeth Maleche-Obimbo, Moorine Sekadde, Mark Cotton, et al.

Children and adolescents living with HIV continue to be impacted disproportionately by tuberculosis as compared to peers without HIV. HIV can impact TB screening and diagnosis by altering screening and diagnostic test performance and can complicate prevention and treatment strategies due to drug–drug interactions. Post-tuberculosis lung disease is an underappreciated phenomenon in children and adolescents, but is more commonly observed in children and adolescents with HIV-associated tuberculosis. This review presents new data related to HIV-associated TB in children and adolescents. Data on the epidemiology of HIV-associated TB suggests that an elevated risk of TB in children and adolescents with HIV persists even with broad implementation of ART. Recent guidance also indicates the need for new screening strategies for HIV-associated TB. There have been major advances in the availability of new antiretroviral medications and also TB prevention options for children, but these advances have come with additional questions surrounding drug–drug interactions and dosing in younger age groups. Finally, we review new approaches to manage post-TB lung disease in children living with HIV. Collectively, we present data on the rapidly evolving field of HIV-associated child tuberculosis. This evolution offers new management opportunities for children and adolescents living with HIV while also generating new questions for additional research.

Evidence for use of a healthy relationships assessment tool in the CHARISMA pilot study

Plos One | 31 December 2021

Elizabeth Tolley, Andres Martinez, Seth Zissette, Thesla Palanee-Phillips, Florence Mathebula, et al.

The CHARISMA intervention, nested within the MTN-025/HOPE vaginal ring trial in Johannesburg, South Africa, seeks to facilitate women's use of HIV prevention products by promoting partner dialogue and mitigating intimate partner violence (IPV). We developed “HEART”, a lay counselor-administered relationship assessment tool, for the CHARISMA pilot. The five-scale tool assesses participants' endorsement of Traditional Values (TV), her HIV Prevention Readiness (HPR) and levels of partner support (PS), abuse and control (PAC), and resistance to HIV prevention (PR), guiding decisions about which of three counselling modules to offer (partner communication/A; ring disclosure/B; and IPV prevention/C).

What Is COVID-19 Teaching Us About Community Health Systems? A Reflection from a Rapid Community-Led Mutual Aid Response in Cape Town, South Africa

IJHPM | January 2022 edition

Manya van Ryneveld, Eleanor Whyte, Leanne Brady

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has exposed the wide gaps in South Africa's formal social safety net, with the country's high levels of inequality, unemployment and poor public infrastructure combining to produce devastating consequences for a vast majority in the country living through lockdown. In Cape Town, a movement of self-organising, neighbourhood-level community action networks (CANs) has contributed significantly to the community-based response to COVID-19 and the ensuing epidemiological and social challenges it has wrought. This article describes and explains the organising principles that inform this community response, with the view to reflect on the possibilities and limits of such movements as they interface with the state and its top-down ways of working, often producing contradictions and complexities. This presents an opportunity for recognising and understanding the power of informal networks and collective action in community health systems in times of unprecedented crisis, and brings into focus the importance of finding ways to engage with the state and its formal health system response that do not jeopardise this potential.

Menstrual health is a public health and human rights issue

The Lancet Public Health | January 2022 edition

Karan Babbar, Jennifer Martin, Josephine Ruiz, Ateeb Parray, Marni Sommer

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, of the 1.9 billion individuals who menstruate, an estimated 500 million were unable to attain menstrual health. Achieving menstrual health is fundamental to the equality, rights, and dignity of all individuals who menstruate. Nonetheless, menstrual health is still not considered a priority by all. As the COVID-19 pandemic puts additional pressure on existing resources, we risk leaving behind the individuals who menstruate. We advocate for the prioritisation of menstrual health as an integral part of sexual and reproductive health programmes, and for holistic approaches that address menstrual health, given that it is affected by the social determinants of health and is not just a sexual and

reproductive health issue.

Violence against women: tackling the other pandemic

The Lancet Public Health | 1 January 2022

Editorial

2021 marked the 30th anniversary of the campaign against gender-based violence. Violence against women is a global public health issue and one of the world's most prevalent human rights violations. According to WHO's Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 736 million women—almost one in three—have been subjected to intimate partner violence (IPV), non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their life. The UN defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”. Violence against women may take several forms, including IPV, sexual violence, physical violence by relatives, employers, or other individuals, femicides (including murders in the name of honour), cyber violence, trafficking, female genital mutilation, and child marriage. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified violence against women, as documented by the recent report by UN Women. Lockdown measures and disrupted support services have left many women isolated with their abusive partners at home, with tragic consequences.

HIV combination prevention and declining orphanhood among adolescents, Rakai, Uganda, 2001–18: an observational community cohort study

The Lancet HIV | 1 January 2022

John Santelli, Ivy Chen, Dorean Nabukalu, Tom Lutalo, Esther Spindler, et al.

Orphanhood increased markedly in the 1980s and 1990s in sub-Saharan Africa because of HIV-related mortality. Little is known about the contribution of HIV interventions, such as antiretroviral therapy (ART) and male medical circumcision, to more recent trends in orphanhood. In this study, we examined trends over time in maternal-only, paternal-only, and double orphanhood among adolescents before and after ART and male medical circumcision became widely available in the Rakai region of south-central Uganda. We sought to understand the association between adolescent orphanhood and HIV combination prevention (community-level ART use and prevalence of male medical circumcision). We hypothesised that increasing combination prevention, including greater use of ART and higher prevalence of male medical circumcision, would be associated with a lower probability of orphanhood.

Primary health care in the Amazon and its potential impact on health inequities: a scoping review

Remote and Rural Health | 1 January 2022

A Sousa, F Herkrath, C Wallace, J Farmer, A Bousquat

Health studies of the Amazon often focus on diseases and infections prevalent in the region, and few studies address health organizations and services. In this sense, this study fills a gap by reviewing the studies aimed at primary healthcare (PHC) implementation in the nine Amazonian countries. This review addresses a need to explore the forms in which PHC is implemented in the Amazon areas outside the urban centers and its potential to reduce health inequities. This study contributes to improvements in the practices of managers and health professionals and research on the topic.

A National Strategy for the “New Normal” of Life With COVID

JAMA Network | 6 January 2022

Ezekiel Emanuel, Michael Osterholm, Celine Gounder

As the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 demonstrates, COVID-19 is here to stay. In January 2021, President Biden issued the “National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness.” As the US moves from crisis to control, this national strategy needs to be updated. Policy makers need to specify the goals and strategies for the “new normal” of life with COVID-19 and communicate them clearly to the public. SARS-CoV-2 continues to persist, evolve, and surprise. In July 2021, with vaccinations apace and infection rates plummeting, Biden proclaimed that “we've gained the upper hand against this virus,” and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) relaxed its guidance for mask wearing and socializing.¹ By September 2021, the Delta variant proved these steps to be premature, and by late November, the Omicron variant created concern about a perpetual state of emergency. In delineating a national strategy, humility is essential. The precise duration of immunity to SARS-CoV-2 from vaccination

or prior infection is unknown. Also unknown is whether SARS-CoV-2 will become a seasonal infection; whether antiviral therapies will prevent long COVID; or whether even more transmissible, immune-evading, or virulent variants will arise after Omicron.

Routine HIV clinic visit adherence in the African Cohort Study

AIDS Research and Therapy | 7 January 2022

Nicole Dear, Allahna Esber, Michael Iroezindu, Emmanuel Bahemana, Hannah Kibuuka, et al.

Retention in clinical care is important for people living with HIV (PLWH). Evidence suggests that missed clinic visits are associated with interruptions in antiretroviral therapy (ART), lower CD4 counts, virologic failure, and overlooked coinfections. We identified factors associated with missed routine clinic visits in the African Cohort Study (AFRICOS).

Offline: The origins story—towards a Deep Ecology

The Lancet | 8 January 2022

Richard Horton

Whatever the precise origins of SARS-CoV-2, one doesn't have to wait for the definitive source of COVID-19 to be identified before important lessons are learned—lessons that the global health community presently seems to be ignoring. There are four immediate priorities. First, countries must strengthen public health surveillance to deliver a globally robust early warning system for pneumonias of unknown aetiology. The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, chaired by Helen Clark and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, made this recommendation in their May, 2021 report to the World Health Assembly. They also recommended that WHO should be empowered to investigate suspected outbreaks with pandemic potential in all countries at short notice; that declarations regarding public health emergencies of international concern should be based on the precautionary principle; and that WHO's IHR Emergency Committee should be more transparent. Progress on these proposals has ranged from slow to non-existent. A \$100 million “hub” for pandemic intelligence has been established in Berlin. A first meeting to discuss possibilities for an international treaty on pandemic preparedness concluded in December, 2021. But there is little sense of urgency. The glutinous bureaucracy of global health once again threatens to dampen any impetus for action.

Children and adolescents deserve a better future

The Lancet | 8 January 2022

Editorial

In January, 2020, we announced a Lancet campaign on child and adolescent health. Our intention was to refocus on child mortality, and on the recognition that adolescents matter in global health, at a time when progress had stalled or in some cases reversed amid changing political and environmental circumstances. Little did we know then what the next 2 years would bring. COVID-19 has been—and still is—a catastrophe for children and young people. In a December report, UNICEF called the pandemic “the biggest threat to children in our 75-year history”. Widespread school and university closures mean that there is now an unprecedented educational and skills deficit globally, with inequities widening and disadvantaged children and adolescents falling even further behind. Digital learning works only for those who have supportive home environments, internet access, and teachers capable of effective online teaching. According to UNICEF, two-thirds of children and young people do not have an internet connection at home.

Risk scores for predicting HIV incidence among adult heterosexual populations in sub-Saharan Africa: a systematic review and meta-analysis

Journal of the International AIDS Society | 9 January 2022

Katherine Jia, Hallie Eilerts, Olanrewaju Edun, Kevin Lam, Adam Howes, et al.

Efficiently identifying populations and individuals at high risk of HIV infection and linking them to effective HIV prevention is essential for continued progress towards ending HIV as a public health threat. Differentiating HIV prevention based on risk of infection is especially important for interventions that are expensive and intensive for both the client and the health system, such as daily oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Identifying those at highest risk for infection is most difficult in sub-Saharan Africa, where 58% of the 1.5 million global new infections in 2020 occurred, and a large proportion of new infections were through heterosexual transmission among the general population.

SARS-CoV-2 infection and coronavirus disease 2019 severity in persons with HIV on antiretroviral treatment

AIDS | 1 February 2022

Julia del Amo, Rosa Polo, Santiago Moreno, Inma Jarrín and Miguel Hernán

Since early in the COVID-19 pandemic, the susceptibility of people with HIV (PWH) to Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection has been debated. On the one hand, residual immunodeficiency and a higher prevalence of comorbidities and immune senescence in persons with HIV could be associated with a greater risk of acquiring the infection and with greater severity. On the other hand, precisely because of their immune dysfunction, PWH could be less likely to develop the hyper inflammatory response that leads to the most severe outcomes. Further, some antiretroviral drugs used by PWH could impair SARS-CoV-2 replication, and thus reduce the severity of the infection.

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RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

HIV/AIDS activist: 'Let's focus on adolescent girls, young women'

Health-e News | 29 December 2021

Adolescent girls and young women have a higher chance of being affected by HIV/AIDS and if not prioritised, the goal of eradicating HIV by 2030, will remain nothing but a fantasy. So says Kenyan-based activist, Irene Ogeta. “The world's biggest population is young people. Adolescent girls are disproportionately affected by HIV and can only achieve their dreams when they are in good health,” said Ogeta. Ogeta was a guest speaker during the recent International AIDS Society (IAS) webinar titled Ethical youth engagement in the HIV response. She said there are several factors that make adolescent girls and young women in Africa more vulnerable to HIV.

Domestic abuse: Teens give brutal firsthand accounts

Health-e News | 31 December 2021

The holiday season can be a particularly dangerous time for those experiencing gender-based violence. One NGO reported a 57 percent increase in calls for help during South Africa's 2020 festive period. The TEARS foundation says it received 43 000 gender-based violence-related calls in December 2020. Sadly, children are the ones who witness these horrific acts of violence as they watch how their caregivers are abused. Health-e News spoke to a few young adults who shared their experiences and memories they'd rather forget.

Gloomy New Year Prognosis – WHO Experts Warn Omicron Could Also Spawn More Dangerous Variants

Health Policy Watch | 1 January 2022

Mass Omicron infection could lead to the formation of new and potentially even more dangerous coronavirus variants, officials from the World Health Organization warned on Thursday. That is despite the fact that the Omicron variant is proving less lethal than its SARS-CoV2 predecessors, such as Alpha, Beta and Delta – which swept through India and then the world beginning in the spring of 2021. “We are giving this virus plenty of opportunities to circulate and the more the virus circulates the more opportunity it has to change,” said Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's COVID-19 technical lead, speaking at the first global press briefing of 2022. “I think, unfortunately, this will not be the last variant you hear us address. It will not be the last variant of concern.”

COVID-19 Could Become Endemic in Africa if 70% Vaccination Coverage is not Achieved by 2022 – Africa CDC

Health Policy Watch | 1 January 2022

COVID-19 could become “endemic” in Africa if the continent is unable to fully vaccinate 70% of its population by the end of 2022, warned Africa Centers for Disease Control Director, Dr John Nkengasong in a press conference on Thursday. An endemic disease is a disease that is always present in a certain population or region. Speaking at the first Africa CDC briefing of 2022, Nkengasong noted that without achieving the vaccination goal, COVID-19 could become an additional disease that African countries would be forced to deal with perennially, in addition to malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. However, with more vaccine doses increasingly becoming available to African countries, he said efforts are underway to

consolidate countries' vaccination initiatives by providing support to enhance actual roll-out of the jabs.

Understanding, not judgment, should shape our response to those who remain unjabbed

The Guardian | 2 January 2022

The start of the coming year will be defined by the UK's vaccination gap, but the issue is more complex than you think. Amid rocketing Covid infection rates, rising hospitalisation numbers and test shortages, the opening weeks of 2022 are going to be defined by the UK's vaccine gap. According to the latest official figures, 91% of people aged over 18 in the UK have had at least one Covid jab, 88% have received two and 64% have had their third. But the 9% who have yet to be vaccinated at all accounts for about five million people, whose preponderance among those now being hospitalised is clearly a huge problem. Precise figures are a matter of debate: some senior NHS staff put the share of unvaccinated people on their wards at up to 90%, although the most recent estimates show the share of people needing critical care who are unvaccinated running at just over 60%. What cannot be doubted is that if more people were vaccinated, the latest phase of the Covid crisis would be much more manageable, and the people in charge might not be faced with such a difficult set of options.

Thousands of men battling prostate cancer could be cured with a 'game-changing' HOUR-long operation that uses electrical currents to destroy tumours

Business Insider | 4 January 2022

Thousands of men with prostate cancer in the UK could be cured with an hour-long operation, doctors hope. The 'game-changing' treatment uses electrical currents to destroy difficult to reach tumours. Surgery to remove the prostate or radiotherapy are the options normally offered to men with the disease. The therapy, called Nanoknife, has been dubbed as 'amazing, simple and quick' after being found to have fewer side effects. Surgeons at University College London Hospital (UCLH) have already used it to treat prostate cancer patients. And medics have called for bigger trials of the procedure, with it already used for liver and pancreatic cancers. The process – called irreversible electroporation – involves sending electrical pulses into tumours which cut open the membrane of the cells.

Western Cape paramedics respond to 50 000 emergencies in December, 5 300 over the New Year weekend

News24 | 4 January 2022

It's been a busy festive season for Western Cape paramedics who responded to almost 50 000 medical emergencies in December. In addition, they were called out to attend to more than 5 300 cases over the New Year weekend alone. In a statement, it emerged that around 44% of the New Year weekend incidents occurred in the Cape Metro. Over the previous Christmas weekend, there were 1 243 incidents. Zooming in on the figures, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) spokesperson Byron La Hoe said there were 11 453 trauma cases, 1 973 road traffic incidents and 204 fires in the province.

Allow GPs to give Covid vaccines: South African Medical Association

BusinessTech | 4 January 2022

The South African Medical Association (SAMA) is calling on the government to allow general practitioners (GPs) to administer Covid-19 vaccines in South Africa. Dr Angelique Coetzee, chairperson of SAMA told eNCA that this would make the country's rollout significantly more convenient and help accelerate the uptake of the vaccine. Under the current system, South Africans can only receive a Covid-19 vaccine from a designated public or private vaccination site. Coetzee said that while mass vaccinations were an important tool at the start of the country's rollout effort, it is now necessary to allow doctors to vaccinate patients who have continued to hold out. She added that all doctors have been trained in properly administering vaccines and that this is the system used by other countries.

Love and condoms: broadcast on the importance of condoms in eastern Europe and central Asia

UNAIDS | 5 January 2022

On the eve of World AIDS Day, the Russian language social media network OK.RU hosted a live broadcast, Telling the Truth, as part of an education project that has been run by UNAIDS and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization since 2015. The show was organized in collaboration with a popular magazine, Domashniy Ochag, and was devoted to the use of condoms and

the link to the HIV epidemic in eastern Europe and central Asia. During the broadcast, which was watched by more than 1 million people, experts and celebrities discussed the most common myths, misconceptions, difficulties and fears connected to condom use.

'Flurona' is coronavirus plus the flu – here's what you should know

BusinessTech | 7 January 2022

It's been dubbed flurona: when a person is infected with the influenza virus and the Covid-19 coronavirus, either simultaneously or back-to-back. Cases are being reported around the globe, and experts say they are likely to grow as the more contagious omicron variant becomes more prevalent. The phenomenon, however, isn't exactly new. Reports of such “co-infections” go back to early 2020. Why is this getting attention now?

A hard lesson for Novak Djokovic: patience with vaccine sceptics is wearing thin

The Guardian | 6 January 2022

This weekend, Novak Djokovic should have been warming up for yet another grand slam. But instead the world No 1 tennis champion – and noted vaccine sceptic – is cooling his heels in an Australian quarantine hotel, while an international row rages over whether he should be kicked out of the country altogether. Djokovic had boasted on social media of securing an exemption, for medical reasons he has not explained, to the rules that all players in the Australian Open must be double-jabbed. But hours later he was stopped at the airport, his visa cancelled, and he was unceremoniously threatened with deportation. His lawyers are challenging that ruling, meaning the outcome of this particular tournament may now be determined in a court – rather than on one. Not since the actor Johnny Depp and his then wife, Amber Heard, flew their two dogs, Pistol and Boo, into the country by private jet without the necessary paperwork has the power of celebrity met the force of Australian biosecurity requirements with quite such explosive results.

Women's Periods May Be Late After Coronavirus Vaccination, Study Suggests

The New York Times | 6 January 2022

Shortly after coronavirus vaccines were rolled out about a year ago, women started reporting erratic menstrual cycles after receiving the shots. Some said their periods were late. Others reported heavier bleeding than usual or painful bleeding. Some postmenopausal women who hadn't had a period in years even said they had menstruated again. A study published on Thursday found that women's menstrual cycles did indeed change following vaccination against the coronavirus. The authors reported that women who were inoculated had slightly longer menstrual cycles after receiving the vaccine than those who were not vaccinated.

Expert comment - estimating deaths globally from air pollution

The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine | 6 January 2022

Two studies highlighting the scale of potentially life-threatening air pollution in urban areas have been published in *The Lancet Planetary Health*. According to the modelling studies by US-based research teams, approximately 86% of people living in urban areas across the globe, or 2.5 billion people, are exposed to unhealthy particulate matter levels, leading to an estimated 1.8 million excess deaths in cities globally in 2019. Additionally, nearly 2 million asthma cases among children worldwide were attributable to NO₂ (nitrogen dioxide gas) pollution in 2019, with two in three occurring in urban areas. Commenting on the studies, Dr Robert Hughes, Clinical Research Fellow at LSHTM and Co-Investigator of Children, Cities and Climate project, said: “These important and timely studies underscore the urgency of improving urban air quality and reducing reliance of fossil fuels in and around our cities.

Will 'Forever Boosting' Beat the Coronavirus?

The New York Times | 6 January 2022

A year ago, just two doses of a Covid-19 vaccine — or even one, in the case of Johnson & Johnson's formulation — were thought to offer sufficient protection against the coronavirus. Now, faced with the extraordinarily contagious Omicron variant, Israel has begun offering fourth doses to some high-risk groups. On Wednesday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention expanded eligibility for boosters to adolescents and backed away from describing anyone as “fully vaccinated” because two shots no longer seem adequate.

The heart of the matter: COVID-19 is far more dangerous

Health-e News | 7 January 2022

A study has revealed that COVID-19 infection is more likely to cause cardiac arrest or heart problems – as opposed to vaccinations. The study, triggered by reports of numerous suspected cases of myocarditis and pericarditis following vaccination, was conducted in England recently. Participants, aged 16 and older, were monitored for a 28-day period and received their vaccines between 1 December 2020 and 24 August 2021. Researchers discovered that there was an increased risk of myocarditis which was associated with the first dose of AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines. It was also linked with the first and second doses of the Moderna vaccine and after a COVID-19 positive test.

Health department gears up for booster shot bustle

Business Day | 9 January 2022

The health department is bracing for an influx of people wanting to get Covid-19 booster shots as it looks to combine vaccine services with mainstream health-care centres such as clinics and hospitals, after an almost lockdown-free festive holiday. The National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) in 2021 decided the country would remain on adjusted lockdown level 1 throughout the festive season, citing modest hospitalisations as the country passed the peak of the fourth wave that was driven by the quicker spreading omicron variant.

Get vaxxed or get sacked: Is dismissal of employees for refusing to get vaccinated permissible in the Labour Relations Act?

Daily Maverick | 9 January 2022

The gazetted directives, which spell out what employers have to do to introduce compulsory Covid-19 vaccination in their workplace – and the steps they have to take if they want to fire someone who refuses vaccination – are a useful starting point for employers and employees alike who want to know if someone can lose their job over the issue. But the matter is far from clear-cut and it will probably need to be tested in the courts for us to have legal clarity.

Stellenbosch researchers may have figured out what causes long Covid

Sunday Times | 9 January 2022

A Stellenbosch University professor and her team may have cracked the mystery of what causes long Covid, which has hit up to 100-million people globally. A study by professor Resia Pretorius, the head of physiological sciences, found that an overload of inflammatory molecules trapped inside microscopic blood clots could cause some of long Covid's symptoms.

Pope backs Covid immunisation campaigns, warns of ideological misinformation

Daily Maverick | 10 January 2022

Pope Francis on Monday condemned "baseless" ideological misinformation about Covid-19 vaccines, backing national immunisation campaigns and calling health care a moral obligation. Francis spoke in his yearly address to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Vatican, sometimes called his "State of the World" address because it is a broad survey of the global situation. His words to diplomats from nearly 200 countries marked the closest he has ever come to a de facto backing of vaccine mandates, which have become controversial in Italy and other European countries.

Tuberculosis remains disease of concern in South Africa

CGTN Africa | 10 January 2022

Tuberculosis (TB) is one of the major causes of death in South Africa, killing thousands every year. "South Africa has the eighth highest TB incidence globally at a rate of 537 per 100,000 population per year," Jody Boffa, an epidemiologist at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, told Anadolu Agency. "It is one of the 16 countries that account for 93 percent of the global TB burden." Last year, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) released a report saying that TB topped the leading causes of death in the country in 2018. Stats SA processed 454,014 deaths that occurred and TB-related deaths stood at 6.0%, followed by diabetes, cerebrovascular diseases, other forms of heart disease and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), among others.

Observational study confirms need for third Pfizer vaccine dose

Health24 | 10 January 2022

Many countries, including South Africa, have Covid-19 booster immunisation programmes in place, especially for people who received the initial two-dose Pfizer vaccine. A new study has found that a third Pfizer dose is warranted as immunity provided by the initial vaccines wanes with the passing of time. The study published in *The BMJ* assessed the time elapsed in test subjects after their second injection of the Pfizer vaccine, and their risk of Covid-19 infection. The researchers enrolled 83 057 adults who underwent a Covid-19 PCR test after receiving their two vaccine injections, at least three weeks after the second dose, and with no previous Covid-19 infection.

South Africans shouldn't be too concerned about new Deltacron variant - Karim

EWN | 11 January 2022

There is a new COVID-19 variant detected in Cyprus but experts said that this was to be expected and there would be more to follow. Dubbed the Deltacron, it appears to combine the Delta and Omicron variants. But infectious diseases epidemiologist, Professor Salim Abdool Karim said that South Africans should not be too concerned.

Questions over implementation of SA's new infection control plan

Spotlight | 11 January 2022

Whether it is in the queue outside a community healthcare clinic, in a GP's waiting room, or in the ICU at a private sector hospital, healthcare-acquired infections (HAIs) pose a threat to people's health. These places are after all where people go if they are struggling with infectious diseases.

Western Cape premier reiterates call for teachers and learners to get vaccinated as coastal schools prepare to reopen

Daily Maverick | 13 January 2022

Only 115,871 children in the Western Cape who are eligible for Covid-19 vaccines have received them. This was announced by provincial health departmental head Dr Keith Cloete, during a weekly Covid-19 briefing on Thursday 13 January.

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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

2021 World AIDS Day report

UNAIDS | 29 November 2021

UNAIDS issued a stark warning today that if leaders fail to tackle inequalities the world could face 7.7 million* AIDS-related deaths over the next 10 years. UNAIDS further warns that if the transformative measures needed to end AIDS are not taken, the world will also stay trapped in the COVID-19 crisis and remain dangerously unprepared for the pandemics to come.

UNAIDS Data 2021

UNAIDS | 29 November 2021

The 90–90–90 targets were missed, but not by much. At the end of 2020, 84% of people living with HIV knew their HIV status, 87% of people living with HIV who knew their HIV status were accessing antiretroviral therapy, and 90% of people on treatment were virally suppressed.

Global Nutrition Report

The 2021 Global Nutrition Report provides a concise data-focused update on the state of diets and nutrition in the world. Independent analysis of the best data on nutrition is critical for evidence-based, timely and effective actions to ensure we deliver on our global commitment to end poor diets and malnutrition.

New indicators added to Key Populations Atlas

UNAIDS | 6 January 2022

The UNAIDS Key Populations Atlas is an online tool that provides a range of information about members of key populations—sex workers, gay men and other men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, transgender people and prisoners—worldwide, together with information about people living with HIV.

UNICEF's annual "State of the World's Children" report, 2021 version is at <https://www.unicef.org/media/108161/file/SOWC-2021-full-report-English.pdf>.

A report marking the 75th anniversary of UNICEF, highlighting the need to build back after COVID-19, is at <https://www.unicef.org/media/112891/file/UNICEF%2075%20report.pdf>

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CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Webinar: New technologies and strategies to overcome the challenges of sexually transmitted infections

When: 26 January 2022

Where: Virtual Webinar

Time: 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM

Click on link to register: <https://cutt.ly/hU6ngzp>

HSR 2022: Call for Abstracts!

HSG is pleased to invite abstract submissions for the 7th Global Symposium on Health Systems Research (HSR2022), to be held in Bogota, Colombia October 31 – November 4, 2022. Read below for theme details, field building requirements, and submission guidelines.

Theme: Systems Performance in the Political Agenda: Sharing lessons for current and future global challenges.

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Chief Human Resources Officer / Head of Human Resources

Closing Date: 16 January 2022

Facility Team Leaders (5): HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING (HSS) UNIT

Closing Date: 26 January 2022

Area Co-ordinators (2): HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING (HSS) UNIT

Closing Date: 26 January 2022

District Co-ordinator (uMgungundlovu District): HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING (HSS) UNIT

Closing Date: 26 January 2022

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