

HST Bulletin_17 February 2023

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CATEGORIES

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ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

COVID-19 Incidence and Mortality Among Unvaccinated and Vaccinated Persons Aged ≥ 12 Years by Receipt of Bivalent Booster Doses and Time Since Vaccination — 24 U.S. Jurisdictions, October 3, 2021–December 24, 2022

CDC | 10 February 2023

Amelia Johnson, Lauren Linde, Akilah Ali, Allison DeSantis, Minchan Shi, et al.

On September 1, 2022, CDC recommended an updated (bivalent) COVID-19 vaccine booster to help restore waning protection conferred by previous vaccination and broaden protection against emerging variants for persons aged ≥ 12 years (subsequently extended to persons aged ≥ 6 months).^{*} To assess the impact of original (monovalent) COVID-19 vaccines and bivalent boosters, case and mortality rate ratios (RRs) were estimated comparing unvaccinated and vaccinated persons aged ≥ 12 years by overall receipt of and by time since booster vaccination (monovalent or bivalent) during Delta variant and Omicron sublineage (BA.1, BA.2, early BA.4/BA.5, and late BA.4/BA.5) predominance.[†] During the late BA.4/BA.5 period, unvaccinated persons had higher COVID-19 mortality and infection rates than persons receiving bivalent doses (mortality RR = 14.1 and infection RR = 2.8) and to a lesser extent persons vaccinated with only monovalent doses (mortality RR = 5.4 and infection RR = 2.5).

Incorporating end-users' voices into the development of an implant for HIV prevention: a discrete choice experiment in South Africa and Zimbabwe

BMC Women's Health | 10 February 2023

Erica Browne, Kgahlisho Manenzhe, Wanzirai Makoni, Sikhanyisiwe Nkomo, Imelda Mahaka, et al.

Input from end-users during preclinical phases can support market fit for new HIV prevention technologies. With several long-acting pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) implants in development, we aimed to understand young women's preferences for PrEP implants to inform optimal design.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in tuberculosis preventive treatment in Brazil: a retrospective cohort study using secondary data

The Lancet Regional Health | 10 February 2023

Iane Coutinho, Layana Costa Alves, Guilherme Loureiro Wrneck and Anete Trajman

Disruptions in tuberculosis services have been reported around the world since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic's effect on tuberculosis preventive treatment (TPT) has been poorly explored. We compared TPT-notified prescriptions and outcomes before and during the pandemic in Brazil.

Utilizing first void urine for high-risk HPV testing for cervical cancer screening in HIV-positive women in Katete, Zambia

BMC Women's Health | 10 February 2023

Marian Kaoma, Oladapo Olayemi, Mwila Hilton Mwaba and Kapembwa Sikwewa

The World Health Organization targets to screen 70% of women worldwide twice for cervical cancer by the year 2030, first by age of 35, and again by the age of 45. However, with the current low screening coverage in many developing countries, this may not be achieved because the invasive sampling method is unacceptable to some. In Zambia, for instance, despite the availability of free cervical cancer screening through the establishment of the Cervical Cancer Prevention Programme, some women are still reluctant to go for screening. First void urine sampling is non-invasive and thus has the potential to increase screening coverage. We aimed to determine the performance of first void urine for high-risk human papillomavirus DNA detection, the prevalence of high-risk HPV, and the acceptability of first void urine sampling.

Scaling up evidence-based approaches to tuberculosis screening in prisons

The Lancet Public Health | 10 February 2023

Salome Charalambous, Kavindhran Velen, Zulma Rueda, Julio Croda, Michael E Herce, et al

People deprived of liberty have among the highest rates of tuberculosis globally. The incidence of tuberculosis is ten times greater than the incidence of tuberculosis in the general population. In 2021, WHO updated its guidance to strongly recommend systematic screening for tuberculosis in prisons and penitentiary systems. Which case-finding strategies should be adopted, and how to effectively implement these strategies in these settings, will be crucial questions facing ministries of health and justice. In this Viewpoint, we review the evidence base for tuberculosis screening and diagnostic strategies in prisons, highlighting promising approaches and knowledge gaps. Drawing upon past experiences of implementing active case-finding and care programmes in settings with a high tuberculosis burden, we discuss challenges and opportunities for improving the tuberculosis diagnosis and treatment cascade in these settings. We argue that improved transparency in reporting of tuberculosis notifications and outcomes in prisons and renewed focus and resourcing from WHO and other stakeholders will be crucial for building the commitment and investments needed from countries to address the continued crisis of tuberculosis in prisons.

Alcohol use, suicidality and virologic non-suppression among young adults with perinatally acquired HIV in Thailand: a cross-sectional study

Journal of the International AIDS Society | 13 February 2023

Linda Aupibul, Pope Kosalaraksa, Surinda Kawichai, Pagakrong Lumbiganon, Pradthana Ounchanum, et al.

Young adults with perinatally acquired HIV (YA-PHIV) are facing transitions to adult life. This study assessed health risk behaviours (including substance use), mental health, quality of life (QOL) and HIV treatment outcomes of Thai YA-PHIV. A cross-sectional study was conducted in Thai YA-PHIV aged 18–25 years who were enrolled in a prospective cohort study at five tertiary paediatric HIV care centres in Thailand. Study data were obtained through face-to-face interviews from November 2020 to July 2021. Assessments were performed for alcohol use (Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test; AUDIT), smoking (Fagerstrom Test for Nicotine Dependence), drug/substance use (Drug Abuse Screening Test; DAST-10), depression (Patient Health Questionnaire for Adolescents; PHQ-A), anxiety (Generalized Anxiety Disorder; GAD-7) and QOL (World Health Organization QOL Brief-Thai). HIV treatment outcomes were extracted from the National AIDS Program database.

Viral burden rebound in hospitalised patients with COVID-19 receiving oral antivirals in Hong Kong: a population-wide retrospective cohort study

The Lancet Infectious Diseases | 13 February 2023

Carlos Wong, Kristy Lau, Ivan Au, Eric Lau, Prof Leo Poon, et al.

Viral rebound after nirmatrelvir–ritonavir treatment has implications for the clinical management and

isolation of patients with COVID-19. We evaluated an unselected, population-wide cohort to identify the incidence of viral burden rebound and associated risk factors and clinical outcomes. We did a retrospective cohort study of hospitalised patients with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 in Hong Kong, China, for an observation period from Feb 26 to July 3, 2022 (during the omicron BA.2.2 variant wave). Adult patients (age ≥ 18 years) admitted 3 days before or after a positive COVID-19 test were selected from medical records held by the Hospital Authority of Hong Kong. We included patients with non-oxygen-dependent COVID-19 at baseline receiving either molnupiravir (800 mg twice a day for 5 days), nirmatrelvir–ritonavir (nirmatrelvir 300 mg with ritonavir 100 mg twice a day for 5 days), or no oral antiviral treatment (control group).

Breakthrough SARS-CoV-2 infections among patients with cancer following two and three doses of COVID-19 mRNA vaccines: a retrospective observational study from the COVID-19 and Cancer Consortium

The Lancet Regional Health Americas | 13 February 2023

Toni K. Choueiri, Chris Labaki, Ziad Bakouny, Chih-Yuan Hsu, Andrew L. Schmidt

Breakthrough SARS-CoV-2 infections following vaccination against COVID-19 are of international concern. Patients with cancer have been observed to have worse outcomes associated with COVID-19 during the pandemic. We sought to evaluate the clinical characteristics and outcomes of patients with cancer who developed breakthrough SARS-CoV-2 infections after 2 or 3 doses of mRNA vaccines. We evaluated the clinical characteristics of patients with cancer who developed breakthrough infections using data from the multi-institutional COVID-19 and Cancer Consortium (CCC19; NCT04354701). Analysis was restricted to patients with laboratory-confirmed SARS-CoV-2 diagnosed in 2021 or 2022, to allow for a contemporary unvaccinated control population; potential differences were evaluated using a multivariable logistic regression model after inverse probability of treatment weighting to adjust for potential baseline confounding variables. Adjusted odds ratios (aOR) and 95% confidence intervals (CI) are reported.

Climate change crisis goes critical

The Lancet Respiratory | *Medicine* 13 February 2023

Editorial

Climate change is the biggest threat to global public health in the 21st century. From the increase in death and illness due to severe weather to worsening air quality, changing patterns of infection, and disruption to food supplies, the health effects of climate change are far reaching. WHO expects approximately 250 000 additional deaths per year between 2030 and 2050 from climate-sensitive diseases, but the exact toll is hard to quantify. Globally, health care is responsible for nearly 5% of greenhouse gas emissions, and in developed countries such as the USA, it is closer to 9%. The respiratory and critical care community manage some of the patients most affected by climate change and air quality, but must now also look at the part that ICUs and health care play in contributing to the problem.

Sleep problems during and after paediatric brain tumours

The Lancet Child and Adolescent | *Health* 14 February 2023

Raphaële van Litsenburg, Dana Kamara, Elin Irestorm, Marita Partanen, Ralph de Vries, Valerie

Brain tumours are among the most common cancer diagnoses in paediatrics. Children with brain tumours are at risk of developing sleep problems because of direct and indirect effects of the tumour and its treatment, in addition to psychosocial and environmental factors. Sleep has an important role in physical and psychological wellbeing, and sleep problems are associated with many adverse outcomes. In this Review, we describe the state of the evidence regarding sleep in people with paediatric brain tumours, prevalence and types of sleep problems, risk factors, and effectiveness of interventions. Evidence shows that sleep problems, particularly excessive daytime sleepiness, are common in people with paediatric brain tumours, with high BMI emerging as a consistent predictor of sleep disruption. Further intervention studies are needed, and clinical evaluation of sleep is warranted for people with paediatric brain tumours.

Key ethical issues encountered during COVID-19 research: a thematic analysis of perspectives from South African research ethics committees

BMC Medical Ethics | 15 February 2023

Theresa Burgess, Stuart Rennie & Keymanthri Moodley

The COVID-19 pandemic presents significant challenges to research ethics committees (RECs) in balancing urgency of review of COVID-19 research with careful consideration of risks and benefits. In the

African context, RECs are further challenged by historical mistrust of research and potential impacts on COVID-19 related research participation, as well as the need to facilitate equitable access to effective treatments or vaccines for COVID-19. In South Africa, an absent National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) also left RECs without national guidance for a significant duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. We conducted a qualitative descriptive study that explored the perspectives and experiences of RECs regarding the ethical challenges of COVID-19 research in South Africa.

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RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

Role of breast cancer screening in the overdiagnosis of thyroid cancer: results from a cross-sectional nationwide survey

BMC Women's Health | 10 February 2023

South Korea has the highest incidence of thyroid cancer worldwide, raising questions regarding the possibility of overdiagnosis. Examining the factors affecting thyroid cancer screening is crucial in elucidating the reasons for this unusually high incidence of thyroid cancer. Therefore, in the present study, we investigated the association between breast cancer screening and thyroid cancer screening to determine the potential role of breast cancer screening in the overdiagnosis of thyroid cancer in South Korea.

Parents, here are 8 measles outbreak questions — answered

Bhekisisa | 10 February 2023

As part of a catch-up vaccination campaign because of South Africa's five-month-long measles outbreak, all children between the ages of six months and 15 years can get a free vaccine in the public sector — even if they've missed a jab in the past (or their parents can't remember if they had all their shots) or if they no longer have a vaccination card, says the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD). Measles is a highly contagious disease that spreads when people breathe in tiny virus-containing droplets that hang in the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. People can also get the virus if they touch a surface onto which these droplets fell and then touch their nose, mouth or eyes.

'A growing threat to human health': we are ill-equipped for the dangers of fungal infections

The Guardian | 10 February 2023

The year is 2003, and a species of *Cordyceps* fungus has made the leap from ants to humans, transforming its hosts into frenzied, bloodthirsty zombies that spread the infection to everyone they bite. The solution proposed by a leading mycologist in Jakarta, Indonesia, where the first cases were detected, is radical, but in her view, essential: bomb the entire city and everyone in it to stop the infection in its tracks. Last month, HBO's long-awaited post-apocalyptic series *The Last of Us* hit our screens, to huge acclaim from both critics and fans. It posits that it isn't viruses or bacteria that pose the greatest threat to society, but fungi — those same organisms beloved by brewers, bakers and wild-food enthusiasts.

Diabetic patients around the world are suffering as result of Ozempic weight-loss trend

IOL | 10 February 2023

Drug shortages is a global problem affecting many low, middle, and high-income countries, putting recovery and patient care at a huge disadvantage. While many countries have developed strategies to overcome the problem, it is seemingly accelerating across the world. This is evident from the shortage of Ozempic worldwide. Ozempic, an injection-based medicine used to help people with type 2 diabetes manage their glucose levels, has been out of stock for six months, arguably as a result of its weight-loss side effects popularised by the social media #Ozempicweightloss.

South African Measles Outbreak Update 2023

National Institute communicable disease | 10 February 2023

The NICD has tested 3279 serum samples for measles since epidemiological week 40, 2022, of which 506 (15.4%) were confirmed positive. In outbreak-affected provinces, 484 cases have been reported since week 40, 2022. In the past weeks (week 04 up until mid-week 05, 2023), there have been 58 laboratory-

confirmed measles cases detected across the country of which 56 are from outbreak-affected provinces. In week 04, the percentage of samples testing positive (PTP) increased to 25% of the 330 samples tested, compared with a lower PTP (under 10%) in week 03, 2023. Whilst the PTP for week 05 looks lower, the data for epidemiological week 05 will be reviewed in the next situation report when all samples collected during week 05 have been tested. All Gauteng cases, except two, originate from Ekurhuleni (Daveyton and Germiston). The two cases not from Ekurhuleni are from Tshwane (Hammanskraal) and Johannesburg (Olievenhoutbosch). In provinces where an outbreak has been declared, the most affected age groups are still the 5–9-year-olds (40%) with a considerable proportion of cases reported among the 1-4 (28%) and 10-14 age groups (17%). Vaccination campaigns should therefore also include children aged 10 to 14.

Not just the baby blues: Depression during pregnancy can harm both mother and child, expert warns

News24 | 10 February 2023

While most people are aware of postnatal depression, not many talk about depression during pregnancy -- something which is quite common among expectant mothers in South Africa. Depression during pregnancy carries risks of increased complications during the gestation period and childbirth, Dr Bavi Vythilingum, a member of the South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP), explains in a press statement. Treatment for pregnant women suffering from depression is available, says Dr Vythilingum. "Psychotherapy, group therapy and even antenatal support groups are all very helpful. Antidepressants are effective and, used in consultation with the mother's healthcare provider; most are safe in pregnancy."

Supporting The Department of Health's outreach to former mineworkers eligible for occupational health injury compensation

Health Systems Trust | 10 February 2023

Many South African households rely heavily on wages earned by hard-working employees in the country's mining industry. Reliance on such income is gravely compromised when the breadwinners are no longer able to put food on the table due to unforeseen circumstances such as closure of mines or injury at work. The Health Systems Trust (HST) again joined forces with fellow District Support Partners (DSPs) to the Department of Health in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN DoH), this time in support of a collaborative initiative by the DoH, Department of Employment and Labour and Department of Mineral Resources and Energy to track, trace and pay the former mine workers or their dependants who qualify for unclaimed social protection benefits from 1965 to 2019 in the form of compensation for illnesses, class action settlement funds and pension or provident funds. Many former mineworkers contracted tuberculosis (TB) or silicosis – an incurable lung disease caused by inhalation of dust that contains free crystalline silica.

Surgery backlogs: TAC warns public healthcare near collapse

Health-e News | 10 February 2023

There are currently 32,000 patients on surgery waiting lists in Gauteng's public hospitals. And the provincial health department says these patients could wait up to five years for certain operations. Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) Gauteng chairperson, Monwabisi Mbasu, blames this on the ongoing load-shedding.

WATCH: February is the month of love and Heart Health Awareness

SABC News | 11 February 2023

February has been marked as the month of love and Heart Health Awareness. On the back of this, St John SA wants to teach South Africans how to keep our hearts beating, and this is through their 'Love your Heart' campaign. To tell us more about how we can take better care of our hearts and the promotion of education about heart health and awareness, we are joined on Zoom by Chris Martin and Shivani Gopi.

Measles outbreak: Parents urged to vaccinate children as health expert warn against panic

IOL | 11 February 2023

While the country is in the grips of a measles outbreak, the National Department of Health (NDoH), the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), said there is no need for panic and schools would remain open. No fatalities have been recorded to date. Gauteng Province reported 47 confirmed measles cases with 33 cases in the Ekurhuleni district, five from

the Johannesburg district, eight from Tshwane and one case from the West Rand district.

KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health says consent is signed for children to be vaccinated

IOL | 12 February 2023

The Department of Health in KwaZulu-Natal assured parents that no child would be vaccinated against their parents' will. This comes after there had been hesitation from parents to vaccinate their children against measles as the vaccination campaign started last week and would end on March 31.

Hypertension, HIV increase CVD risk

Healio | 12 February 2023

Hypertension was associated with increased risk for CVD in both individuals with and without HIV, researchers reported in Hypertension. In addition, individuals living with HIV were at an increased risk for acute MI compared with individuals without HIV. "These data emphasize the importance of the prevention and treatment of hypertension among individuals with HIV," Mohammed Siddiqui, MD, MBBS, instructor in medicine (nephrology) at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and colleagues wrote. To examine the association between hypertension and CVD in patients with and without HIV, Siddiqui and colleagues analyzed 108,980 individuals aged 19 years or older with HIV and no history of CVD, as well as 435,920 individuals aged 19 years or older without HIV or any history of CVD from the MarketScan database between 2011 and 2019. Median follow-up was 2.3 years.

Mental Stress Among Doctors A Hidden Epidemic

The Pioneer | 12 February 2023

Being a doctor has long been considered one of the most rewarding and sought-after occupations. However, this profession also comes with stress---some unique to the medical profession, others typical of high-pressure and highly skilled occupations. Doctors are not immune to mental illness, with between a quarter and a third reporting increased symptoms of mental ill health, which has been heightened after Covid-19 Pandemic. It is estimated that more than 1 million doctors are in India. Every year more than 80,000 medical students graduate as doctors from 529 medical colleges in India. Doctors have 2.5 times the risk of dying by suicide as compared to the general population.

SA Medical Association outraged over Sona's failure to address healthcare crisis

The Citizen | 13 February 2023

The South African Medical Association (Sama) expressed concern over the recent State of the Nation Address (Sona) and the lack of attention given to the collapsing healthcare system, which is already in a state of disaster. The association is calling for immediate action to be taken to address these issues and improve the state of the healthcare system in South Africa.

Bivalent booster recipients show slightly higher protection against infection and significantly higher protection against death than monovalent booster recipients

News Medical Life Science | 13 February 2023

In a recent report published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), researchers reported on the immune protection conferred by monovalent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccines and bivalent booster doses.

AHF Africa Praises African Leaders' Pledge to End AIDS in Children

Businesswire | 13 February 2023

Today, the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF), the largest provider of HIV/AIDS care globally, praised the commitment by African nations to eliminate AIDS in children by 2030. In a meeting convened by the United Republic of Tanzania, Ministers and representatives of twelve African countries collectively backed the Dar es Salaam Declaration on ending AIDS in children by laying out a concrete stratagem anchored on four pillars, including early screening and treatment for newborns and children, expanding treatment access for pregnant women living with HIV, preventing new infections among pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls, and removing gender, rights-based and socio-structural barriers that impede access to services for many.

Why SA is not getting the new bivalent SARS-CoV-2 vaccines

Spotlight | 13 February 2023

The Department of Health is not planning to buy the new COVID-19 bivalent booster vaccines, specifically tailored to target Omicron variants, anytime soon. Instead, people in South Africa will continue to be offered the standard booster Pfizer-BioNtech and Johnson and Johnson (J&J) vaccine doses. The department and vaccine experts advise those individuals who are over the age of 60 years, especially those with underlying conditions who have not had their fourth dose, to do so as soon as possible.

Could electric bikes clean the air in the country of a quarter-million motorcycles?

Bhekisisa | 13 February 2023

The streets of Cotonou, Benin's largest city, have been Domingo Soule's workplace for 35 years. The 50-year-old motorcycle taxi driver spends his days driving for miles on roads shrouded in exhaust fumes, picking up customers and taking them to where they want to go. He is one of more than 250,000 moto-taxi drivers in the West African country, where most people use two-wheelers to get around. But Soule has developed a cough from breathing in air pollution, he believes, and at the end of each day his eyes hurt.

Cable theft disrupts services at Bongani Hospital

Health-e News | 13 February 2023

Bongani Regional Hospital in Welkom had to transfer critically ill patients to nearby facilities after cable theft left it without electricity for several hours last week. The provincial health department says the generator wires were also cut, so they could not switch to back-up power. Health MEC, Montsheng Tsiu says in the early hours of Friday the Free State Department of Health was informed the electricity feeder cable to the hospital was stolen.

Cancer dubbed a world health pandemic - experts say we have a looming crisis on our hands

IOL | 13 February 2023

The World Health Organization has dubbed cancer a global health pandemic second only to Covid-19. This is gravely alarming considering the magnitude of the cancer burden is attributable to potentially modifiable risk factors crucial for the development of effective prevention and mitigation strategies against cancer.

Thai government shuts down key-population led PrEP services

Aidsmap | 13 February 2023

Thailand's government has stopped the country's leading pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) services from operating, jeopardising an approach that has attracted international attention and is at the heart of Asia's largest PrEP programme. Around 80% of people using PrEP in Thailand receive it from a clinic led and staffed by members of the community that it serves. But under new rules, only government doctors can prescribe PrEP and community services cannot dispense it. Another rule change stops PrEP being issued to people excluded from the country's main health insurance system. Most of the services affected are 'key-population led services'. Key populations are groups of people who are disproportionately affected by HIV – in Thailand, men who have sex with men, transgender women and sex workers. The clinics are run by community members and have meaningfully engaged the wider community to create services that respond to their needs. "Even though we have trained community providers, technicians, and years of experience in PrEP provision, we are not allowed to provide PrEP or even stock it in our clinic," Surang Janyam, director of the SWING Foundation, told aidsmap.

Landmark medical negligence ruling orders SA hospitals to treat - not pay – victim

News24 | 13 February 2023

An Eastern Cape court has ruled that a young victim of medical negligence be provided free medical care at the state's expense rather than a lump sum payout. The Bisho High Court ruling, which may set a precedent for medical negligence cases, goes against the established practice of paying lump sums "on a once and for all basis" administered by a trust.

Statement: Rising to the challenges of 2023 for women and girls

UN Women | 13 February 2023

Let us pause for a moment of collective condolences for the tens of thousands of lives lost and the many more injured in the earthquakes in southern Türkiye and northern Syria. UN Women is contributing to the

response with and through the UN System, including through dedicated gender expertise. Everywhere, crises continue to exact their highest toll on women and girls. In fact, 2023 looks set to be one of the most challenging since UN Women's establishment. COVID and its longer-term impacts are not behind us. The food and energy crisis fueled by the war in Ukraine continues to impact those furthest left behind the most and threaten global security and sustainable development. Climate change, and in particular climate-driven disasters, still demand a gender lens in adapting and mitigating impacts.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2023: far from over

The Lancet | 14 February 2023

3 years ago, on Jan 5, 2020, the Department of Zoonoses at the National Institute of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention (Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention) announced the isolation of a new Coronavirus responsible for a wave of respiratory illnesses. On Jan 30, WHO declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Despite many efforts to learn from the pandemic during the past 3 years, and discussions on international treaties of pandemic preparedness, the global response remains inadequate and fragmented. In 2023, far from it being the end of the pandemic (as hoped by many and announced for the USA by President Biden in September last year), there is a new, dangerous phase that requires urgent attention.

STI home tests could be coming to SA's free medicine pick-up points

Bhekisisa | 14 February 2023

Free home tests for four common — and curable — sexually transmitted infections (STIs), namely gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and trichomoniasis, could soon be available at chronic medicine pick-up points around the country, according to a draft of South Africa's fifth HIV, TB and STI action plan. Government clinics will also roll out STI tests that give results on the same day. The new plan is being finalised after comments from the public and civil society were added, says Nelson Dlamini, communications manager of the South African National Aids Council (Sanac). The final draft will be published on World TB Day on 24 March.

How do blood tests work? Medical laboratory scientists explain the pathway from blood draw to diagnosis and treatment

The Conversation | Health 14 February 2023

Medical laboratory testing is the heartbeat of medicine. It provides critical data for physicians to diagnose and treat disease, dating back thousands of years. Unfortunately, laboratory medicine as a field is poorly understood by both the public and health care communities.

How Climate Change Is Spreading Malaria in Africa

The New York Times | 14 February 2023

The mosquitoes that transmit the disease dramatically increased their range over the last century as temperatures warmed, scientists reported.

COVID-19 more severe than bacterial, viral pneumonia in ICU-admitted older adults

Healio | 14 February 2023

Mortality rates among ICU patients aged 70 years and older were considerably higher in those with COVID-19 compared with those who had bacterial or other viral pneumonia, according to researchers. Lenneke E. M. Haas, MD, PhD, from the department of intensive care at Diakonessenhuis, Utrecht Hospital in the Netherlands, and colleagues wrote that advanced age poses a significant risk factor for severe COVID-19 and adverse health outcomes; however, "literature about outcomes of older patients admitted to the ICU because of other pneumonia and the relation of their outcome with several factors is scarce."

Nigeria records 216 confirmed diphtheria cases – NCDC

Vanguard | 14 February 2023

Nigeria has recorded 216 diphtheria cases and 40 deaths, according to the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, NCDC. Diphtheria is a serious bacterial infection that affects the nose, throat and sometimes, the skin of an individual. It is caused by the bacterium *Corynebacterium* species, mainly by toxin-producing *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* and rarely by toxin-producing strains of *C. ulcerans* and *C. pseudotuberculosis*.

Five Priorities for Global Pandemic Preparedness

Health Policy Watch | 14 February 2023

On 27 February, World Health Organization member states will meet to commence formal negotiations on a global pandemic preparedness agreement – unofficially turning the page from responding to COVID-19 to readying ourselves for future health emergencies. While the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) of member states have already held a series of meetings, as well as stakeholder briefings, the negotiations at the end of the month hold special significance as they follow on from the publication of the “zero draft” of the envisioned international legal instrument. And with the aim of concluding a draft instrument by May 2024, the clock is already counting down. This is a huge undertaking, and millions of lives depend on learning the right lessons from our collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pharmaceutical industry, which played an indispensable role in defeating COVID-19, recommends focusing on five priorities.

A day in the life of a health systems trust Data Management Officer

Health Systems Trust | 15 February 2023

Meet Rhulane Madale, the dedicated Health Systems Trust (HST) Data Management Officer who has been serving the SA SURE PRO project in KwaZulu-Natal's uMgungundlovu District since October 2018. Her accurate and timeous reporting supports HST's Monitoring and Evaluation teams as well as district and sub-district levels of the Kwa-Zulu Natal Department of Health (KZN DoH) in strengthening local capacity for providing sustainable HIV and TB care and treatment in line with the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets to end AIDS by 2030. Recording and reporting accurate data is critical for health systems strengthening, and that is why Madale views herself as being a watchman through the lens of data.

Hunger in South Africa: study shows one in five are at risk

The Conversation | 15 February 2023

Everyone is vulnerable in some way, whether it's to natural disasters, chronic diseases or hunger. But some are more at risk than others because of what they are exposed to socially, economically and environmentally. This phenomenon is known as social vulnerability. It refers to the attributes of society that make people and places susceptible to natural disasters, adverse health outcomes and social inequalities.

Project Flamingo: A beacon of light for patients with breast cancer

University of Cape Town | 15 February 2023

“Many women will be affected by a breast cancer diagnosis in their lifetime, and we see the devastating effect this diagnosis has every day in our surgical and oncology units at Groote Schuur Hospital (GSH). The reality is that our services and resources cannot keep up with this massive patient load,” she said. “There is an urgent need to address the deficit in the distribution and capacity of breast cancer surgical services in South Africa and to close the cancer care gap we face.”

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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!

University of the Western Cape: DSI/NRF SARCHI Chair in Health Systems, Complexity and Social Change (1 POST)

The postdoctoral fellow will be attached to the Learning Partnership Project for a Gender Transformative Approach (LP4GT) project, which is multidisciplinary project (led by Prof Asha George and Ms Nikki Schaay, in collaboration with colleagues from **NACOSA** and **Hope Africa**). The project aims to create a collaborative community-based learning platform to support dialogue, exchange, capacity strengthening, and other forms of learning on gender transformative approaches in adolescent and young people's sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) in South Africa.

University of the Western Cape: DSI/NRF SARCHI Chair in Health Systems Governance (1 POST)

The postdoctoral fellow will advance a programme of a work in one or more of the following areas:

1. Tracking and evaluating primary health care and district health system reforms, in the context of National Health Insurance reforms
2. Learning partnerships in support of district and sub-district health system development
3. Integrating and scaling up quality improvement initiatives
4. Intersectoral governance and whole of society approaches to health and wellbeing

University of the Western Cape: School Health Project (1 POST)

The postdoctoral fellow will work on a project : *“Assessment of Integrated School Health Programmes in eThekweni (Marian Hill), uMzinyathi (Dundee) and Ugu (Port Shepstone) Health Districts in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa”* which aims at assessing the implementation of two models of the new integrated school health programme in KwaZulu-Natal.

Pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV prevention in Europe and Central Asia Monitoring implementation of the Dublin Declaration – 2022 progress report

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is very effective at preventing novel HIV infections when taken as prescribed. It is an important element in the 'combination prevention' necessary to reach the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal of ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. Since 2016, PrEP has been increasingly available through healthcare systems in countries in the World Health Organization (WHO) European Region, but in 2022 17 countries (five in the EU) had not yet formally implemented PrEP in their healthcare systems. Certain key populations, such as people who inject drugs, prisoners, and undocumented migrants, remain ineligible for PrEP in many countries in the WHO European Region.

Call for abstracts: 53rd Union World Conference on Lung Health

Every year for 53 years, The Union World Conference on Lung Health has come together to present the latest scientific research in all aspects of lung health. But our work does not stop there. Generating new evidence from research projects and presenting the results or publishing it in a journal is not enough. We need implementation. We need research converted into practice. We need to strive for evidence-based health policies and decisions. Submissions of abstracts, symposia, post-graduate courses and workshops will open on 16 February and close by 6 April 2023 at 23:59 Central European Time (CET).

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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.

Promoting Menstrual Health: Towards Sexual and Reproductive Health for All

Observer Research Foundation | 10 February 2023

Maternal mortality rates remain high in low- and middle-income countries, where 94 percent of all cases are recorded. In India, maternal mortality ratio stands at 113 per 100,000 live births; the government is aiming to reduce the incidence to below 70 by 2030. Experts agree that the promotion of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is among the keys to addressing this massive challenge. However, women—especially those with disability and those caught in conflict or disasters—and transgender and non-binary people continue to face massive challenges in accessing sexual and reproductive healthcare.

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CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

UNICEF HIV & AIDS webinar: Children and Adolescents: Closing the Funding Gap

22 February 2023 | 02:00 PM in London

Sign up for this webinar on closing the funding gaps for children and adolescents affected by HIV. Hear the findings from our new report and why they matter for ending #AIDS in children and adolescents.

The Lancet Summit - Childhood obesity: consequences across the life course

March 2-3, 2023 | Virtual | Free to attend

In partnership with the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the World Obesity Federation. Join us online for the Lancet Summit - Childhood obesity: consequences across the life course.

Resilient Health Systems for Africa: Re-envisioning the Future Now

March 5th - 8th 2023 | Kigali Convention Centre, Rwanda

For seven years Amref Health Africa, together with like-minded partners have been hosting the Africa Health Agenda International Conference (AHAIC), a biennial high impact convening that brings together diverse stakeholders from around the world to discuss challenges and opportunities for improving health in Africa.

Webinar: Pharmacy Law AND E-learning: Ethics in Pharmacy Law

7 March 2023 | LexisNexis South Africa

A webinar hosted by LexisNexis and presented by Andy Gray and Dr Mariet Eksteen (PSSA). Our 2 panellists will address the topics of ethics and disciplinary processes, the linkages between pharmacy law and medical law, as well as the Schedule 5 & 6 Risks, based on a selected case study. This set is inclusive of a copy of the *Pharmacy Law in SA* book authored by Andy Gray and 2 others and a single user licence to our eLearning course: Legal Ethics for Pharmacists.

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

There are currently no vacancies available at the moment.

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