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ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

A Retrospective Study of Incidence and Predictors on Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV among HIV-Exposed Infants in West Guji Zone, Southern Ethiopia

AIDS Research and Treatment | 23 February 2022

Girish Degavi, Boko Loka Safayi, Shiferaw Gelchu Adola, Biniyam Demisse, Takala Utura, et al

The transmission of HIV from mother to child among HIV-positive infants is estimated to be higher than 20%, despite the fact that antiretroviral treatment is available for antenatal mothers with HIV. In Ethiopia, the prevalence of HIV transmission from mother to child among infants aged one and a half years is estimated to be approximately 15.7 percent. *Methods.* A retrospective cohort analysis using a simple random sampling technique was incorporated among 422 HIV-exposed babies and their mothers who were randomly chosen and screened using OPD (outpatient card) from March 2019 to March 2021 in the general hospitals of West Guji zone, Oromia, Ethiopia.

Overweight and obesity in non-pregnant women of childbearing age in South Africa: subgroup regression analyses of survey data from 1998 to 2017

BMC Public Health | 25 February 2022

Overweight and obesity in adults are increasing globally and in South Africa (SA), contributing substantially to deaths and disability from non-communicable diseases. Compared to men, women suffer a disproportionate burden of obesity, which adversely affects their health and that of their offspring. This study assessed the changing patterns in prevalence and determinants of overweight and obesity among non-pregnant women in SA aged 15 to 49 years (women of childbearing age (WCBA)) between 1998 and 2017.

Psychological factors of diet quality among rural populations of Latin America during the COVID-19 pandemic: a cross-sectional study

Rural and Remote Health | Health 3 March 2022

Durán-Agüero S, Vinueza-Veloz MF, González-Medina G, Carpio-Arias V, Ríos-Castillo I, et al.

This study aimed to determine the relationship between symptoms of anxiety and/or anhedonia (inability to feel pleasure) and diet quality during confinement due to COVID-19 in rural populations in Latin America.

South African healthcare workers' knowledge of dolutegravir's drug–drug interactions in the first year of its rollout: a cross-sectional online survey

Briony S. Chisholm, Annoesjka M. Swart, Marc Blockman

Wiley Online | Library 7 March 2022

In December 2019, dolutegravir-based treatment was recommended as first-line antiretroviral therapy (ART) in South Africa. Dolutegravir has clinically significant interactions with several commonly used drugs, such as rifampicin, metformin and cation-containing medicines. National guidelines detail these interactions and how to manage them. While previous international studies have shown low healthcare worker knowledge of drug–drug interactions, there is a paucity of information on antiretroviral interaction knowledge in the South African setting, where much ART is nurse-led. The study aimed to determine this knowledge and to describe which variables were associated with gaps in knowledge.

Data-driven identification of communities with high levels of tuberculosis infection in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Scientific Reports | 10 March 2022

Mauro Faccin, Olivier Rusumba, Alfred Ushindi, Mireille Riziki, Tresor Habiragi, et al

When access to diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis is disrupted by poverty or unequal access to health services, marginalized communities not only endorse the burden of preventable deaths, but also suffer from the dramatic consequences of a disease which impacts one's ability to access education and minimal financial incomes. Unfortunately, these pockets are often left unrecognized in the flow of data collected in national tuberculosis reports, as localized hotspots are diluted in aggregated reports focusing on notified cases. Such system is therefore profoundly inadequate to identify these marginalized groups, which urgently require adapted interventions. We computed an estimated incidence-rate map for the South-Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, a province of 5.8 million inhabitants, leveraging available data including notified incidence, level of access to health care and exposition to identifiable risk factors. These estimations were validated in a prospective multi-centric study. We could demonstrate that combining different sources of openly-available data allows to precisely identify pockets of the population which endorses the biggest part of the burden of disease. We could precisely identify areas with a predicted annual incidence higher than 1%, a value three times higher than the national estimates. While hosting only 2.5% of the total population, we estimated that these areas were responsible for 23.5% of the actual tuberculosis cases of the province. The bacteriological results obtained from systematic screenings strongly correlated with the estimated incidence ($r = 0.86$), and much less with the incidence reported by epidemiological reports ($r = 0.77$), highlighting the inadequacy of these reports when used alone to guide disease control programs.

Expanding Efforts and Support to Respond to the HIV and COVID-19 Intersecting Pandemics

JAMA Network | 11 March 2022

Lawrence Corey, Russell Corbett-Detig, Chris Beyrer

Considerable inferential data indicate that immunocompromised persons with persistent COVID-19 infection may be involved in the generation of SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern globally. The largest immunocompromised population worldwide is people living with HIV. Although tremendous gains have been made in providing access to lifesaving antiretroviral therapy, only approximately 50% of the estimated 37.7 million people living with HIV globally are optimally treated. The emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant is a stark illustration of the intersecting COVID-19 and HIV pandemics, highlighting the interrelationships and detrimental effects each of these infectious diseases has on the other. HIV infection is a risk factor for increased mortality from COVID-19, even more so when HIV is not controlled by antiretroviral therapy,⁶ and emerging data suggest that immunosuppression may be facilitating the development of SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern.

Drug therapy for osteoporosis in older adults

The Lancet | 12 March 2022

Prof Ian R Reid, Emma O Billington

The goal of osteoporosis management is to prevent fractures. Several pharmacological agents are available to lower fracture risk, either by reducing bone resorption or by stimulating bone formation. Bisphosphonates are the most widely used anti-resorptives, reducing bone turnover markers to low

premenopausal concentrations and reducing fracture rates (vertebral by 50–70%, non-vertebral by 20–30%, and hip by ~40%). Bisphosphonates bind avidly to bone mineral and have an offset of effect measured in months to years. Long term, continuous use of oral bisphosphonates is usually interspersed with drug holidays of 1–2 years, to minimise the risk of atypical femoral fractures. Denosumab is a monoclonal antibody against RANKL that potently inhibits osteoclast development and activity. Denosumab is administered by subcutaneous injection every 6 months. Anti-fracture effects of denosumab are similar to those of the bisphosphonates, but there is a pronounced loss of anti-resorptive effect from 7 months after the last injection, which can result in clusters of rebound vertebral fractures.

TB training in Kenya: building capacity for care and prevention

Public Health Action (IngentaConnect) | 21 March 2022

P Angala, RA Dlodlo, S Wanjala, G Mamo, L Mugambi-Nyabonga, et al

Devolution of healthcare services in Kenya resulted in a large number of newly recruited tuberculosis (TB) coordinators. We describe a unique collaboration between a national tuberculosis program (NTP), a local, and an international non-governmental organization to build human resource capacity in TB care and prevention.

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RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

South Africa Approves Dapivirine Vaginal Ring for Use by Women

International Partnership for Microbicides | 11 March 2022

The nonprofit International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM) today announced that the monthly dapivirine vaginal ring received regulatory approval from the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) for its use by women ages 18 and older to reduce their HIV risk. This marks a major milestone that brings the first long-acting and woman-controlled product another step closer to reaching women. “This approval is a positive step toward offering women more prevention options they can use to control their health on their own terms. We are delighted to continue celebrating International Women's Day with this news for women's HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health,” said Dr. Zeda Rosenberg, IPM's founder and CEO. “We look forward to collaborating with the South African government and partners to incorporate the monthly ring into the health system, and into women's lives in South Africa.”

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

Health-E News | 11 March 2022

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

Second Anniversary of COVID-19 – ‘Building Back Better’ Encounters New Challenges

Health Policy Watch | 11 March 2022

Two years after the World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a global pandemic on 11 March 2022, the developed world's long-time fixation on the SARS-CoV2 virus, which has killed 6 million people, has suddenly shifted away from health to the war in Ukraine and sharply rising geopolitical tensions. Meanwhile high-income countries have dropped restrictions as their citizens clamour for a return to normalcy. Low-income countries, including many in Africa, are still encountering resistance to COVID vaccine campaigns. While African Union countries have been eager to see more technology transfer to the continent to increase medicines and vaccine production– some countries may also be quietly questioning if COVID vaccination should be prioritized over the fight against other deadly disease threats – from cholera to Lassa fever.

Meeting highlights from the Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee (PRAC) 7-10 March 2022 Share: COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen: small vessel vasculitis added as a side effect

European Medicines Agency | 11 March 2022

EMA's medicines safety committee (PRAC) has recommended that small vessel vasculitis with cutaneous manifestations (inflammation of blood vessels in the skin which may result in a rash, pointed or flat, red spots under the skin's surface and bruising) should be added to the product information of COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen as a possible side effect of unknown frequency. Small vessel vasculitis can be caused by viral or bacterial infections as well as by medicines and vaccines. Generally, manifestations of the disease spontaneously resolve over time with appropriate supportive care.

SA left to languish as deadline for ending (or extending) National State of Disaster looms

Daily Maverick | 11 March 2022

As Tuesday's deadline for the end – or the extension – of South Africa's National State of Disaster looms, the Cabinet is yet to announce alternative regulations to manage Covid-19. Until such time, the country is still on Adjusted Alert Level 1 regulations, despite growing calls for them to be scrapped over concerns of economic recovery. Agitation is growing as the government continues to be vague in providing details on the lifting of the National State of Disaster, which is scheduled for Tuesday, 15 March – marking two years since it was first declared in response to the pandemic.

Student nurses in Eastern Cape demand jobs from provincial government

GroundUp | 11 March 2022

About 200 nurses protested on a field in Bhisho on Wednesday against the provincial Department of Health's decision not to hire them when they complete their training at the end of March. They are among over 630 nursing students whose contracts will be terminated soon, despite a contractual agreement that they must work for the department for about four years after they qualify. The department funds the nurses' four years of study and then they are expected to work in the provincial health service for four years. But this year the department says it does not have enough money to take them on.

Hopes raised for once-a-week pills for range of conditions

The Guardian | 11 March 2022

New technology that allows for daily medications to instead be taken just once a week or month could transform the lives of people with conditions ranging from schizophrenia to opioid addiction, researchers have said. The method has also been developed for a new type of contraceptive pill – a capsule, initially tested in pigs, that dissolves in the stomach to release a six-armed structure that delivers synthetic hormones over three weeks before falling apart and exiting the body. Lyndra, the company that is developing the technology – backed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – plans to start phase 1 trials in humans towards the end of this year. And the technology is also being applied to a host of other medications, including ivermectin for eradicating malaria. A once-a-week pill containing risperidone, an antipsychotic used for people with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, is to go into clinical trials this year, the company said, and is expected to be submitted for approval by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) by the end of next year, with approval hoped for by the end of 2024.

Donald Pinkel, Who Developed a Cure for Childhood Leukemia, Dies at 95

The New York Times | 12 March 2022

The disease was once a virtual death sentence for children. Today, his aggressive treatments mean that almost everyone survives it. Dr. Donald Pinkel, a pediatrician who, starting in the early 1960s, developed an aggressive treatment for childhood leukemia that transformed the disease from a virtual death sentence to one that almost every patient survives, died on Wednesday at his home in San Luis Obispo, Calif. He was 95.

Pfizer jab safe and effective, regulator says in response to social media alarm

Times Live | 12 March 2022

The Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine remains safe and effective, says SA's medicines regulator. The SA Health Products Regulatory Authority (Sahpra) issued the reassurance in response to alarm on social media

about a safety report on the vaccine to the US Food and Drug Administration. The report considered more than 7-million self-reported instances of negative side effects, with the most common being pain at the injection site, fatigue and headaches. But it said these faded substantially after a day.

Covid chaos fueled another public health crisis: STDs

Politico | 12 March 2022

Sexual health experts and government officials are warning that without federal action, millions of Americans could face severe, even fatal, consequences if infections go untested and untreated. Two-plus years of pandemic isolation didn't lower the nation's record rates of sexually transmitted diseases. Instead, they got much worse. After an initial dip when the pandemic began in the spring of 2020, cases of gonorrhea and syphilis surged, reaching new highs by the end of the year, according to preliminary data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Progress on HIV, which President Donald Trump pledged to end by 2030, also slowed significantly. Public health experts expect that when the CDC releases 2021 numbers later this year, they will show that Covid-19 made a bad situation exponentially worse as clinics closed, people lost health insurance and risky behavior surged.

Stop attacks on health care in Ukraine

Joint statement from UNICEF, UNFPA, and WHO | 13 March 2022

"Today, we call for an immediate cessation of all attacks on health care in Ukraine. These horrific attacks are killing and causing serious injuries to patients and health workers, destroying vital health infrastructure and forcing thousands to forgo accessing health services despite catastrophic needs. "To attack the most vulnerable – babies, children, pregnant women, and those already suffering from illness and disease, and health workers risking their own lives to save lives – is an act of unconscionable cruelty. "In Ukraine, since the start of the war, 31 attacks on health care have been documented via the WHO's Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care (SSA). According to these reports, in 24 incidents health care facilities were damaged or destroyed, while in five cases ambulances were damaged or destroyed. These attacks have led to at least 12 deaths and 34 injuries, and affected access to and availability of essential health services. WHO is verifying further reports, as attacks continue to be reported despite the calls for protection of health care.

Saving children's lives through effective viral load management

Health Systems Trust | 14 March 2022

Guidance from UNAIDS confirms that routine viral load tests are the most accurate way of determining whether antiretroviral therapy (ART) is working to suppress replication of HIV. Achieving viral suppression protects the body's immune system, helps people living with HIV stay healthy, prevents transmission of HIV to other people, and can reduce the need for more expensive second- and third-line ART regimens. A viral load test measures the number of HIV particles per millilitre of blood. In a person on treatment, a low viral load indicates that the virus is less active in the body. A high viral load indicates either that the medication is not being taken properly, or that the virus is becoming resistant to the medication. Healthcare workers play a crucial role in ensuring consistent viral load monitoring for HIV-positive children on ART, guiding the process of disclosure to the child, explaining the complexities of administering paediatric formulations to caregivers, and providing ongoing support for treatment adherence. In uThukela District, there are 5 101 patients on ART in the 0–19 age group, and the overall district rate for viral load suppression among this group is 73%. Amazizi Clinic in Bergville serves 111 of these patients, and has achieved a viral load suppression rate of 83%.

Obama Says He Tested Positive for Covid, Feeling Fine

Daily Maverick | 14 March 2022

Former President Barack Obama says he has had a scratchy throat for a couple of days but is "feeling fine otherwise."

I just tested positive for COVID. I've had a scratchy throat for a couple days, but am feeling fine otherwise.

Michelle and I are grateful to be vaccinated and boosted, and she has tested negative.

It's a reminder to get vaccinated if you haven't already, even as cases go down

— Barack Obama (@BarackObama) March 13, 2022

Discriminatory attitudes remain common

UNAIDS | 14 March 2022

The prevalence of discriminatory attitudes towards people living with HIV varies widely. Across nearly all regions, there are countries where large proportions of adults continue to hold discriminatory attitudes towards people living with HIV. In 52 of 58 countries with recent population-based survey data, more than 25% of people aged 15 to 49 years reported holding discriminatory attitudes towards people living with HIV, and more than 50% held discriminatory attitudes in 36 of 58 countries.

With Less Than 1% Vaccinated, DRC Trains 'Rumour-Busters' to Tackle COVID Misinformation

Health Policy Watch | 14 March 2022

With fewer than 1% of its 90 million citizens vaccinated against COVID-19, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has resorted to training teams of “rumour-busters” to tackle misinformation about the virus in order to encourage more people to get the vaccine. David Olela, communications lead for the DRC health ministry's vaccination programme, admits that his government had been “stuck”, with “no idea how to combat both the pandemic and the disinformation at the same time” until it got help from “infodemic experts”. Health workers, religious and community leaders and journalists spread across the DRC's vast landmass of around 2.3 million square kilometres have been trained to help combat misinformation.

Shunning anti-vaxxers is not the answer — community involvement in vaccine campaigns is

Daily Maverick | 14 March 2022

In many instances of vaccine hesitancy in Africa, public trust in the state and public health science is particularly important. A government that is not trusted, but perceived as corrupt, whose office bearers are seen as self-serving, has little chance of carrying out a successful vaccine campaign. On 1 March 2022 the Nelson Mandela Foundation, housed at the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory, instituted its mandatory vaccine policy that stipulates that any person over the age of 12 must be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 before entering the premises, subject to a few exemptions. This policy, of course, required staff to be vaccinated. I support the policy, and others like it, as much as I am uncomfortable with the notion of it. It seemed in a way that we are saying “Anti-vaxxers not welcome”. It wasn't a particular policy clause that I needed a conversation on, but the very notion of a vaccine mandate. The apparent sentiment against so-called anti-vaxxers is that they are among those that would not do God's work if the devil bade them, as the saying goes. They are seen as entitled, precious, wilfully ignorant, the less said about them the better. And I'm sure many of them have earned that sentiment.

Frontline workers at Helen Joseph Hospital add voices to call for urgent reopening of Charlotte Maxeke

Daily Maverick | 14 March 2022

The picket was timed to coincide with a promise that the reopening of the casualty department at the Charlotte Maxeke hospital would take place on Monday, 14 March. As feared though, it has still not happened. On Monday morning, a group of more than 50 health workers, including senior doctors and heads of department, held a short, dignified picket outside the accident and emergency entrance of the 600-bed Helen Joseph Hospital in Johannesburg. The picket was organised to highlight the adverse impact that the continued closure of Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital (CMJAH) is having on the quality of health services at Helen Joseph Hospital and on the morale and safety of people who work there.

Editorial: Dysfunctional provincial health departments make a mockery of the 'capable state'

Spotlight | 14 March 2022

One of the great paradoxes in healthcare in South Africa is that, while we have many impressive healthcare experts in the country, most of our provincial health departments, the entities tasked with managing the provision of most healthcare services in the country, are poorly managed. Currently, this disconnect is particularly apparent in Gauteng. The province is the country's economic centre. It houses multiple medical training institutions, a number of leading service delivery NGOs, scores of top researchers and research entities, and of course, much of South Africa's private healthcare sector is headquartered in the province. The province is also comparatively rich in the non-health skills required to run a provincial health department – finance, administration and so on.

Childhood cancer: Heroic teen beats disease while fighting hunger

Health-E News | 14 March 2022

At the age of 17, Xichavo Mhangani, fought and overcame not only childhood cancer but also hunger as he faced his journey alone. Now 19, the young man can look back at a period he describes as the most difficult of his life. Not only did he fight cancer without the support of his parents, but hunger as well, as he struggled to keep his family alive. His siblings regard him as their hero given his brave efforts. Mhangani, 15 at the time, had to step up and become both a father and mother to his two younger siblings when his mother passed away. Their mother was their only source of hope with their father out of the picture. "I believe that I became a man at a very young age. Our mom was the only family we had and to be honest, life has never been easy for us since her death. My cancer diagnoses only made it worse," he said.

UNAIDS Executive Director's Statement at the 65th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

UNAIDS | 14 March 2022

Thank you Ambassador Ghislain D'hoop and Belgium as the Chair of the 65th Commission on Narcotic Drugs, distinguished members of the Commission, Member States, Civil Society and networks of people who use drugs, UN agencies and all colleagues... Last year UNAIDS worked with all countries and partners to develop and adopt the Global AIDS Strategy. The golden thread of the strategy is on ending inequalities in an epidemic where 65% of all new infections are within particular groups – and these include people who use drugs and prison inmates. We know that if we continue as we are, if we do not close the inequalities in the HIV response - the world could see 7.7 million AIDS deaths over the next ten years.

Discovery to offer ultra low-cost health cover in South Africa

Bloomberg | 14 March 2022

Discovery is starting to sell private health cover in South Africa at about a third of the price of its prior entry-level product, a move to attract new customers and tap into pandemic-heightened concerns about health. The administrator of the country's largest medical-insurance provider, which has more than 40% market share, will offer primary care for about R350 a month, giving customers access to a network of doctors, emergency procedures and treatment for chronic conditions including HIV.

Unjabbed to pay more for life insurance as Covid-19 death claims surge

Business Day | 14 March 2022

Sharp rise in death claims demonstrates the third wave was significantly more severe than the first two waves of the pandemic. Faced with a surge in Covid-19 death claims, SA life insurers are hiking the premiums on policies for the unvaccinated as they warn that death rates among those who have not received shots could remain elevated even as the pandemic eases. The latest data available from the Association for Savings and Investment SA (Asisa), whose members include players in the R3.7-trillion life insurance industry, showed that the value of death claims in the six months to September 2021 more than doubled from the same period in 2019, before the onset of the pandemic. Life insurers reported a 53% surge in claims. The period covered the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, which lasted from early May to mid-September.

Tuberculosis: South Africa's forgotten killer

Mail & Guardian | 15 March 2022

At a 1982 tuberculosis conference in Pretoria, one of the presenting doctors stressed that, "while one entertains a high index of suspicion for tuberculosis, one must not forget that there are other conditions which may present in a similar fashion". Forty years later, that omen looks to have been cruelly turned on its head. A persistent cough. High fever. Night sweats. Not very long ago, patients presenting with these symptoms in South Africa were sent straight for a tuberculosis test. Not so since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The similarity between tuberculosis and Covid-19 symptoms, and the resultant failures to exclude for tuberculosis among patients who present with them, is one of the reasons that untreated cases of South Africa's most chronic killer have likely surged under the cover of lockdown.

Dapivirine vaginal ring: SA rollout put on ice for now

Health-E News | 15 March 2022

South African women will have to wait before laying their hands on the newly-approved dapivirine vaginal

ring (DPV-VR – while the National Department of Health assesses the effectiveness of the HIV prevention device. Department of Health (DOH) spokesperson, Foster Mohale, explained the reasons for the rollout delay. “The department will review the clinical indicators and the implementation requirements approved by the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA). We will assess the ring’s effectiveness, the cost of procurement product, the delivery requirements, and the potential impact on HIV incidence,” said Mohale.

How do South Africans feel about wearing masks?

Health-E News | 15 March 2022

South Africa is still in a state of disaster, we find out If South Africans think we need to continue wearing masks. The government has extended the State of Disaster to 15 April. We took to the streets to ask South Africans how they feel about the mask mandate. Tuesday also marks two years since the government first declared a State of Disaster in response to the pandemic.

Four priority actions to slow the silent pandemic of antimicrobial resistance

Health Policy Watch | 15 March 2022

The COVID-19 pandemic has killed 6 million people so far, but the next pandemic threat could emerge unnecessarily from pathogen resistance to life-saving antibiotics and other anti-microbial drugs. What steps do we need to take now to head off this growing threat? For decades, antibiotics have been hailed as “wonder drugs” for their ability to turn life-threatening infections into treatable conditions. By one estimate, antibiotics have extended average human life expectancy by more than 20 years since their discovery almost a century ago. But today, we are on the brink of losing this powerful tool – a warning that Alexander Fleming conveyed in his Nobel acceptance speech in 1945 for the discovery of penicillin, the world’s first broad-spectrum antibiotic: “It is not difficult to make microbes resistant to penicillin in the laboratory by exposing them to concentrations not sufficient to kill them, and the same thing has occasionally happened in the body. The time may come when penicillin can be bought by anyone in the shops”.

COVID-19 vaccines: South Africans urged to report adverse events

Health-E News | 15 March 2022

The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) has urged South Africans to report adverse effects experienced due to COVID-19 vaccines. This call comes at a time when reporting of such events has hit a low in the country. Florah Matlala, head of the Pharmacovigilance unit at SAHPRA, highlighted the importance of reporting these events. “Reporting of adverse events is very important because it contributes to the greater safety of medicines globally. Some questions have been raised regarding South Africa’s level of reporting. We are aware of that and we are doing everything in our power to promote the reporting of these events,” stated Matlala. Matlala spoke during a SAHPRA webinar where vaccine safety and adverse events was discussed.

New lockdown rules for South Africa to replace state of disaster – here’s what you should know

Business Tech | 16 March 2022

The Department of Health has published new regulations under the National Health Act which will effectively act as a long-term replacement to South Africa’s state of disaster Covid regulations. This is part of the government’s transition plans from the current state of disaster which has been in effect for over two years, the department said in an accompanying statement. The new regulations will effectively act as a new instrument for the government to manage the current Covid pandemic and future pandemics. As such, the 157-page document covers dozens of major issues including entry to and from the country, the wearing of masks, vaccinations and the management of the deceased.

Ramaphosa, Dlamini-Zuma must explain reasons for extended level 1 Covid-19 lockdown, say opposition members

IOL | 16 March 2022

It has been 24 months since the National State of Disaster was first declared in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic, with an extension for another month approved. South Africa’s State of Disaster was set to expire yesterday, however, under Section 3 of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act No. 57 of 2002) it can be extended by the minister by notice in the gazette for one month at a time before it lapses.

Minister Dlamini-Zuma on Tuesday announced another extension of the state of disaster which is now set to expire on April 15.

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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.

Tuberculosis Epidemiologic Studies Consortium (TBESC)

TBESC-III: Implementing and Evaluating Interventions to Increase Treatment of Latent TB Infection in Primary Care Settings

The Tuberculosis Epidemiologic Studies Consortium (TBESC) is a CDC-funded initiative to carry out observational epidemiologic research and related studies to improve identification, diagnosis, prevention, and control of TB disease and latent TB infection. TBESC is one of CDC's flagship TB research consortia tasked with identifying approaches to accelerate TB elimination in the United States. The current research cycle, known as TBESC-III, began in September 2021 and ends in March 2026.

Learning Support Tool on Gender and Health Systems

Gender analysis is critical to building more responsive health systems and promoting universal health coverage, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goal targets for health will be dependent on progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 5, committing countries to achieve gender equity. As part of the EU's second Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 (GAPII), ReBUILD and RinGs were invited by the EU DEVCO B4 team to work with EC health staff in delegations to improve the considerations of gender in their HSS work. Following an initial workshop and case study development, a learning support tool was developed, designed to complement current EC resources on gender. The objective of this is to help EC delegates to consider a range of gender sensitive health responses to operationalise within their complex portfolios of health systems strengthening projects. **This resource is now openly available on the EU website.**

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PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

Strengthening COVID-19 vaccine demand and uptake in refugees and migrants

WHO | 14 March 2022

An operational guide to support all those responsible for planning and implementing the rollout of COVID-19 vaccine to refugees and migrants at national and local levels, 14 March 2022

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CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

COVID-19 Case Management Webinar Series: COVID-19 in children and young persons

Date: 22 March 2022

Time: 13:30 – 15:30 CET

The World Health Organisation is pleased to invite you to the COVID-19 Case Management Webinar Series: COVID-19 in children and young persons. COVID-19 in children although in most cases mild, some children will present with moderate and severe disease. These children will require hospital admission and are at increased risk of complications and adverse outcomes. This webinar will focus on key elements to consider in the clinical management of mild, moderate or severe COVID-19 in children and young persons.

Technical consultation session: 'Access and benefits sharing and the WHO BioHub system'

Date: 22 March 2022

Time: 14:00 – 15:30 CET

The technical consultation is titled 'Access and benefits sharing and the WHO BioHub System'. The aim of this consultation is to help design the WHO BioHub System through an inclusive, iterative and consultative process on several key topics with various stakeholders including relevant non-state actors. Input resulting from these consultation will allow Member States to have an informed discussion of, and provide input to the WHO Secretariat on, elements pertinent to designing the WHO BioHub System. The WHO BioHub System aims to be a new, fast, and complementary system under development by WHO, with an intended global reach to allow Member States to share non-influenza biological materials with epidemic or pandemic potential (BMEPP) on a voluntary basis to facilitate effective characterization and surveillance of those BMEPP, as well as the timely production and equitable allocation of diagnostic products, devices, therapeutics, and vaccines. More details on the WHO BioHub System can be found [here](#).

21st meeting of the Malaria Policy Advisory Group (MPAG)

23 – 24 March 2022 Virtual

The 21st meeting of the Malaria Policy Advisory Group (MPAG) will take place virtually on 23–24 March 2022. The meeting is open to the public.

World TB Day 2022 - Online Talk Show

24 March 2022 12:30 – 15:00 CET

The World Health Organization (WHO) is organizing a special virtual talk show to commemorate World TB Day on 24 March. This will put the spotlight on TB under the theme - 'Invest to End TB. Save Lives' to convey the urgent need to invest resources to ramp up the fight against TB and achieve the commitments to end TB made by global leaders. This is especially critical in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic that has put End TB progress at risk, and to ensure equitable access to prevention and care in line with WHO's drive towards achieving Universal Health Coverage. The event will take place in a talk-show format with speakers connected by video on WHO's interactive web-platform- End TB Forum. The main speakers will include Ministers, leaders and other high-level government representatives, Heads of Agencies, TB survivors, civil society and partners. The Show will be broadcast live, with interactive Q&A from the audience online.

SAVE-THE-DATE: WHO consultation on COVID-19 vaccines research - Advancing the development of pan-sarbecovirus vaccines

Date: Friday, 25 March 2022

Time: 13h00 to 18h30 CET

In continuation to the scientific discussions on COVID-19 vaccines research, WHO R&D Blueprint is organizing a consultation to identify vaccine research priorities to facilitate further contributions of vaccines to achieve improved control of the pandemic everywhere.

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

District Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer

Closing Date: 21 March 2022

HEALTH SYSTEM STRENGTHENING (HSS) UNIT: UB Clinical Advisor: KZN

Closing Date: 23 March 2022

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