

# HST Bulletin



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## ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

### **Compassionate Use of Remdesivir for Patients with Severe Covid-19**

*The New England Journal of Medicine* | Published: 10 April 2020.

Jonathan Grein, Norio Ohmagari, Daniel Shin, George Diaz, Erika Asperges, Antonella Castagna, et al  
Remdesivir, a nucleotide analogue prodrug that inhibits viral RNA polymerases, has shown in vitro activity against SARS-CoV-2.

[The authors] provided remdesivir on a compassionate-use basis to patients hospitalized with Covid-19, the illness caused by infection with SARS-CoV-2. Patients were those with confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection who had an oxygen saturation of 94% or less while they were breathing ambient air or who were receiving oxygen support. Patients received a 10-day course of remdesivir, consisting of 200 mg administered intravenously on day 1, followed by 100 mg daily for the remaining 9 days of treatment. This report is based on data from patients who received remdesivir during the period from January 25, 2020, through March 7, 2020, and have clinical data for at least 1 subsequent day.

### **Outcomes of second-line antiretroviral therapy among children living with HIV: a global cohort analysis**

*Journal of the International AIDS Society* | Published: 15 April 2020.

*The Collaborative Initiative for Paediatric HIV Education and Research (CIPHER) Global Cohort Collaboration*

Limited data describe outcomes on second-line antiretroviral therapy (ART) among children globally. [The authors'] objective was to contribute data on outcomes among children living with HIV after initiation of second-line ART in the context of routine care within a large global cohort collaboration.

Patient-level data from 1993 through 2015 from 11 paediatric HIV cohorts were pooled. Characteristics at switch and through two years of follow-up were summarized for children who switched to second-line ART after starting a standard first-line regimen in North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia, Southern Africa (South Africa & Botswana) and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Cumulative incidences of mortality and loss to follow-up (LTFU) were estimated using a competing risks framework.

### **Hepatitis B virus seroepidemiology data for Africa: Modelling intervention strategies based on a systematic review and meta-analysis**

*PlosMedicine* | Published: 21 April 2020.

Anna L McNaughton, José Lourenço, Phillip Armand Bester, Jolynne Mokaya, Sheila F Lumley, Uri Obolski, et al

International Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for elimination of hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection set ambitious targets for 2030. In African populations, infant immunisation has been fundamental to reducing incident infections in children, but overall population prevalence of chronic hepatitis B (CHB) infection remains high. In high-prevalence populations, adult catch-up vaccination has sometimes been deployed, but an alternative Test and Treat (T&T) approach could be used as an intervention to interrupt transmission. Universal T&T has not been previously evaluated as a population intervention for HBV infection, despite high-profile data supporting its success with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

### **South African mothers' immediate and 5-year retrospective reports of drinking alcohol during pregnancy**

*PlosOne* | Published: 16 April 2020.

Kodi B Arfer, Mary J O'Connor, Mark Tomlinson, Mary Jane Rotheram-Borus

Prenatal alcohol-drinking is often measured with self-report, but it is unclear whether mothers give more accurate answers when asked while pregnant or some time after their pregnancy. There is also the question of whether to measure drinking in a dichotomous or continuous fashion. We sought to examine how the timing and scale of self-reports affected the content of reports. From a sample of 576 black mothers around Cape Town, South Africa, we compared prenatal reports of prenatal drinking with 5-year retrospective reports, and dichotomous metrics (drinking or abstinent) with continuous metrics (fluid ounces of absolute alcohol drunk per day).

### **Menstrual health management and schooling experience amongst female learners in Gauteng, South Africa: a mixed method study**

*BMC Reproductive Health* | Published: 15 April 2020.

Tamaryn L Crankshaw, Michael Strauss, Bongjwe Gumede

There has been increased attention to the menstrual health management (MHM) needs of girls and young women in Eastern and Southern Africa, relating to dignity, and to the potential link between the lack of access to sanitary products and school absenteeism. In the South Africa, there is inadequate evidence to guide appropriate national responses. This study explored the extent of access to modern sanitary products amongst female high school learners and the range of needs and challenges that they face in managing their menses in school settings in Gauteng, South Africa.

### **Health System Outcomes in BRICS Countries and Their Association With the Economic Context**

*Frontiers in Public Health* | Published: 31 March 2020.

Piotr Romaniuk, Angelika Poznańska, Katarzyna Brukało, Tomasz Holecki

The aim of the article is to compare health system outcomes in the BRICS countries, assess the trends of their changes in 2000–2017, and verify whether they are in any way correlated with the economic context. The indicators considered were: nominal and per capita current health expenditure, government health expenditure, gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, GDP growth, unemployment, inflation, and composition of GDP. The study covered five countries of the BRICS group over a period of 18 years. [The authors] decided to characterize countries covered with a dataset of selected indicators describing population health status, namely: life expectancy at birth, level of immunization, infant mortality rate, maternal mortality ratio, and tuberculosis case detection rate.

### **Anxiety: An overlooked confounder in the characterisation of chronic stress-related conditions?**

*PlosOne* | Published: 16 April 2020.

Monet Viljoen, Rohan M Benecke, Lindi Martin, Rozanne CM Adams, Soraya Seedat, Carine Smith

Although anxiety disorders are among the most prevalent of psychiatric disorders, childhood trauma-related studies seldom consider anxiety proneness as distinct aetiological contributor. [This study] aimed to distinguish between trauma- and anxiety-associated physiological profiles. South African adolescent volunteers were categorised for trauma exposure (CTQ, mean score  $39 \pm 11$ ) and anxiety proneness (AP) (CASI, mean score  $37 \pm 7$ , STAI-T, mean score  $41 \pm 8$ ).

### **High levels of imported asymptomatic malaria but limited local transmission in**

## **KwaZulu-Natal, a South African malaria-endemic province nearing malaria elimination**

*BMC Malaria Journal | Published: 15 April 2020.*

*Jaishree Raman, Laura Gast, Ryleen Balawanth, Sofonias Tessema, Basil Brooke, Rajendra Maharaj, et al*

KwaZulu-Natal, one of South Africa's three malaria endemic provinces, is nearing malaria elimination, reporting fewer than 100 locally-acquired cases annually since 2010. Despite sustained implementation of essential interventions, including annual indoor residual spraying, prompt case detection using malaria rapid diagnostics tests and treatment with effective artemisinin-based combination therapy, low-level focal transmission persists in the province. This malaria prevalence and entomological survey was therefore undertaken to identify the drivers of this residual transmission.

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## **RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS**

### **COVID-19: The time for procrastination over patents is over**

*Spotlight NSP | 20 April 2020.*

The path to patent law reform in South Africa has been long and arduous. But the need for finalisation of legislation is now even more urgent given the COVID-19 pandemic and the expected rush to the patent office for monopolies on new and repurposed medicines, diagnostics, medical devices, and other vital health products, including personal protective equipment.

### **'Instead of Coronavirus, the Hunger Will Kill Us.' A Global Food Crisis Looms.**

*The New York Times | 22 April 2020.*

The world has never faced a hunger emergency like this, experts say. It could double the number of people facing acute hunger to 265 million by the end of this year.

### **My late uncle, and the ethics of clinical trials in Africa**

*Mail & Guardian | 18 April 2020.*

The year I turned 11, my uncle, Josiah Ssesanga, was admitted to Mulago hospital, Uganda's biggest, with meningitis. HIV-positive, in 1994. Between him and certain death, stood Uganda's tattered postwar health system. Nobody was naive about his prognosis. The end of his life was months away at best.

### **Gates Foundation praises SA's swift action on Covid-19**

*BD Live | 16 April 2020.*

Foundation opposes US President Donald Trump's decision to suspend support to World Health Organisation.

### **Doubt is essential for science – but for politicians, it's a sign of weakness**

*The Guardian | 21 April 2020.*

People are searching for certainty about coronavirus, and that's the opposite of what leads to scientific breakthroughs

### **Groote Schuur: The big barn is getting ready for a Covid-19 surge**

*Daily Maverick | 23 April 2020.*

A public sector doctor at the frontline describes what it's like getting a huge hospital ready for a potential pandemic storm surge.

### **Ramaphosa announces R20bn 'extraordinary budget' for health sector to fight Covid-19**

*BD Live | 21 April 2020.*

The 'extraordinary health budget' is equivalent to 8.7% of the R230bn set aside for health in the February budget.

### **Coronavirus: UK plans to test 300,000 for immunity**

*The Guardian | 23 April 2020.*

Results from the study will be vital for planning an exit strategy from the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **Phones aren't giving girls more power in their lives after all**

*The Conversation Africa | 20 April 2020.*

Over the past decade mobile phones have often been credited with the potential to improve the lives of poor people in low-income countries. Phones are seen as a tool to use in contexts like health, micro-enterprise and education. A common thread is that they should be able to improve the lives of women and girls.

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## **TRAINING AND RESOURCES**

### **NDoH cloth face-mask recommendations: April 2020**

*South African National Department of Health | 17 April 2020.*

The National Department of Health recommends that everyone in South Africa should wear a cloth face-mask when in public. Commuters travelling in taxis, or other forms of public transport, as well as people spending time in spaces where physical distancing is difficult to practice, are particularly encouraged to wear cloth face-masks.

### **SA's Covid-19 epidemic: Trends & Next steps**

*Salim S Abdool Karim, CAPRISA | 13 April 2020.*

The presentation prepared by Salim S. Abdool Karim, the Chair of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Covid-19, for Minister of Health Zweli Mkhize. This PDF of the PowerPoint presentation given by Abdool Karim contains data on the epidemic's trajectory around the world and projections of what we might expect in South Africa. It explains the rationale behind South Africa's lockdown, examining community transmission levels and outlining the NDoH response.

### **Coronavirus Disease (COVID19) Situation Dashboard**

*World Health Organisation | Updated daily.*

This interactive dashboard/map provides the latest global numbers and numbers by country of COVID-19 cases on a daily basis.

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## **PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS**

### **Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak: rights, roles and responsibilities of health workers, including key considerations for occupational safety and health**

*World Health Organisation | 18 March 2020.*

Health workers are at the front line of the COVID-19 outbreak response and as such are exposed to hazards that put them at risk of infection. Hazards include pathogen exposure, long working hours, psychological distress, fatigue, occupational burnout, stigma, and physical and psychological violence. This document highlights the rights and responsibilities of health workers, including the specific measures needed to protect occupational safety and health.

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## **CONFERENCES AND EVENTS**

Due to the disruption COVID-19 has caused the conferencing industry many events have been cancelled or postponed. As a result of this uncertainty we have decided not to list any conferences and events in the Bulletin for the time being.

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## **JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

Please click on the job title for more information.

**Isibani: Radiographer**

Closing Date: 30 April 2020

**SARCS: Programmes Manager**

Closing Date: 1 May 2020

**Health Systems Trust: Call for expressions of interest - Design and Layout Agencies**

Closing Date: 8 May 2020

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