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ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

Vaccine promotion strategies in community pharmacy addressing vulnerable populations: a scoping review

BMC Public Health | 23 September 2023

Alexandre Chadi, Daniel J. G. Thirion & Pierre-Marie David

Social determinants of health are drivers of vaccine inequity and lead to higher risks of complications from infectious diseases in under vaccinated communities. In many countries, pharmacists have gained the rights to prescribe and administer vaccines, which contributes to improving vaccination rates. However, little is known on how they define and target vulnerable communities.

<https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-023-16601-y>

The long-term impact and value of curative therapy for HIV: a modelling analysis

Journal of the International AIDS Society | 25 September 2023

Curative therapies (CTx) to achieve durable remission of HIV disease without the need for antiretroviral therapy (ART) are currently being explored. Our objective was to model the long-term health and cost outcomes of HIV in various countries, the impact of future CTx on those outcomes and the country-specific value-based prices (VBPs) of CTx.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jia2.26170>

Can HIV self-testing reach first-time testers? A telephone survey among self-test end users in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Senegal

BMC Infectious Diseases | 25 September 2023

Arsène Kouassi Kra, Arlette Simo Fosto, Kouassi Noël N'guessan, Olivier Geoffroy, Sidibé Younoussa, et al.

Coverage of HIV testing remains sub-optimal in West Africa. Between 2019 and 2022, the ATLAS program distributed ~400 000 oral HIV self-tests (HIVST) in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Senegal, prioritising female sex workers (FSW) and men having sex with men (MSM), and relying on secondary redistribution of HIVST to partners, peers and clients to reach individuals not tested

through conventional testing. This study assesses the proportion of first-time testers among HIVST users and the associated factors.

<https://bmcinfectdis.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12879-023-08626-w>

Highly sensitive and rapid point-of-care testing for HIV-1 infection based on CRISPR-Cas13a system

BMC Infectious Diseases | 25 September 2023

Xiaohui Li, Bin Su, Lan Yang, Zhihua Kou, Hao Wu, et al.

Human immunodeficiency virus type one (HIV-1) is the leading cause of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). AIDS remains a global public health concern but can be effectively suppressed by life-long administration of combination antiretroviral therapy. Early detection and diagnosis are two key strategies for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS. Rapid and accurate point-of-care testing (POCT) provides critical tools for managing HIV-1 epidemic in high-risk areas and populations.

Antibiotic prescribing practices for acute respiratory illness in children less than 24 months of age in Kenema, Sierra Leone: is it time to move beyond algorithm driven decision making?

BMC Infectious Diseases | 25 September 2023

Troy D. Moon, Ibrahim Sumah, Gustavo Amorim, Foday Alhasan, Leigh M. Howard, et al.

Lower respiratory tract infections are the leading cause of mortality in young children globally. In many resource-limited settings clinicians rely on guidelines such as IMCI or ETAT + that promote empiric antibiotic utilization for management of acute respiratory illness (ARI). Numerous evaluations of both guidelines have shown an overall positive response however, several challenges have also been reported, including the potential for over-prescribing of unnecessary antibiotics. The aims of this study were to describe the antibiotic prescribing practices for children less than 24 months of age with symptoms of ARI, that were admitted to Kenema Government Hospital (KGH) in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone, and to identify the number of children empirically prescribed antibiotics who were admitted to hospital with ARI, as well as their clinical signs, symptoms, and outcomes.

<https://bmcinfectdis.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12879-023-08606-0>

Mobility and HIV vulnerabilities among female sex workers in Guinea-Bissau: findings from an integrated bio-behavioral survey

BMC Public Health | 25 September 2023

Emma M. Gorin, Carrie E. Lyons, Brooke A. Jarrett, Mamadu A. Djalo, Kátia Barreto, et al.

Mobility is an important risk determinant for HIV given the potential for intermittent access to HIV services. Mobility may be particularly relevant among female sex workers, (FSW) who have been shown to be at high risk for HIV in settings around the world. Data regarding the role mobility plays in exacerbating HIV risks among FSW across Sub-Saharan Africa remains limited, and data on FSW in Guinea-Bissau is sparse.

<https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-023-16744-y>

Changes in HIV Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Coverage at State and County Level During the COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States

Aids and Behaviour | 26 September 2023

Mahdi Fallahi, Jenny S. Guadamuz, Andrew Shooshtari & Dima M Qato

This study quantifies the prevalence and trends in weekly PrEP coverage at the national, state and county-level, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. We estimated weekly PrEP coverage using longitudinal individual-level pharmacy claims from IQVIA LRx for a cohort of PrEP users (N = 287,493) ages 16 to 85 years between December 29th, 2019 and November 8th, 2020. Weekly PrEP coverage was defined as PrEP use among individuals at high risk for HIV. We conducted an interrupted time series analysis to quantify changes in weekly PrEP coverage before (December 29th, 2019 - March 8th, 2020) and during (March 29th - November 8th, 2020) the COVID-19 pandemic at the national, state and county-level by county characteristics, specifically by EHE priority jurisdiction, racial/ethnic composition, and urbanity.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10461-023-04180-3>

A Comparison of Self-reported Condomless Sex and Yc-DNA Biomarker Data from Young Women Engaged in High Risk Sexual Activity in Kampala, Uganda

Aids and Behaviour | 26 September 2023

Pippa Boering, Janet Seeley, Joshua Buule, Onesmus Kamacooko & Rachel King, et al.

Reporting of condom-use can limit researchers' understanding of high-risk sexual behaviours. We compared self-reported condom-use with the Yc-DNA biomarker data and investigated potential factors influencing participation in, and reporting of, sexual behaviours. Self-reported data were collected using Audio Computer Assisted Self Interviews (ACASI) and samples for Yc-DNA biomarker were collected using self-administered and health worker-collected vaginal swabs from 644 women (aged 15–24 years) who were not living with HIV. Yc-DNA results and interview data were compared using McNemar-Bowker Analysis and Cohen's Kappa. Test statistics for Yc-DNA biomarker were calculated. Log Binomial models for Yc-DNA and self-reported results were conducted to assess for association.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10461-023-04177-y>

Alcohol, Sexual Arousal, and Partner Familiarity as Predictors of Condom Negotiation: An Experience Sampling Study

Aids and Behaviour | 26 September 2023

Peter Luehring-Jones, Daniel Fulford, Tibor P. Palfai, Jeffrey S. Simons & Stephen A. Maisto, et al.

Numerous contextual factors contribute to risky sexual decision-making among men who have sex with men (MSM), with experimental laboratory-based studies suggesting that alcohol consumption, sexual arousal, and partner familiarity have the potential to impact condom negotiations during sexual encounters. The purpose of the current study was to extend this line of inquiry outside of the laboratory and into the everyday lives of MSM. We collected six weeks of daily data on alcohol consumption and sexual behaviors from 257 moderate- and heavy-drinking MSM to examine the within- and between-subjects effects of alcohol consumption, average daily sexual arousal, and partner familiarity on condom negotiation processes during sexual encounters.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10461-023-04189-8>

Ranking age-specific modifiable risk factors for cardiovascular disease and mortality: evidence from a population-based longitudinal study

eClinical Medicine | 26 September 2023

Fei Tian, Lan Chen, Zhengmin (Min) Qian, Hui Xia, Zilong Zhang et al.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD), including coronary artery disease (CAD), heart failure, and stroke, remain the leading cause of mortality worldwide. In 2019, it was estimated that 17.7 million years lived with disability (YLDs) and 18.6 million deaths were attributable to CVD.¹ In the United Kingdom, CVD claimed the lives of 163,000 individuals in 2019, with 73.6% of these cases occurring in the elderly. Furthermore, 1.18 million hospital admissions attributable to CVD were documented, resulting in an immense economic burden of nearly 19 billion pounds.² Due to rising life expectancy, especially in developed countries like the UK, CVD risk is typically associated with advancing age, while morbidity crowd displays a trend of younger average age.

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370\(23\)00407-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370(23)00407-8/fulltext)

Quantitative estimates of preventable and treatable deaths from 36 cancers worldwide: a population-based study

The Lancet Global Health | 26 September 2023

Clara Frick, Harriet Rumgay, Jérôme Vignat, Ophira Ginsburg, Ellen Nolte, et al.

Cancer has become an increasingly important cause of premature mortality globally, and is associated with high societal and economic costs. As an example, productivity losses linked to premature cancer deaths were estimated at €104.6 billion or 0.62% of the national gross domestic product in Europe, and at US\$46.3 billion or 0.33% of the combined gross domestic product of the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). It has been argued that premature deaths from specific cancers should be avoidable in the presence of effective public health interventions and health-care systems.⁴ However, this approach neglects the nature of cancer as a heterogeneous group of diseases with varying natural histories, aetiologies, and outcomes.

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(23\)00406-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(23)00406-0/fulltext)

Factors that influence adolescent girls and young women's re-initiation or complete discontinuation from daily oral PrEP use: a qualitative study from Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Journal of the International AIDS Society | 27 September 2023

Lindsey de Vos, Emily Krogstad Mudzingwa, Lauren Fynn, Millicent Atujuna, Matinatsa Mugore, et al

Adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) face barriers that jeopardize their prevention-effective use of daily oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). We sought to understand factors that influence AGYW's prolonged breaks in PrEP use, and their decisions to re-initiate or discontinue using PrEP in the context of a community-based adherence support intervention.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jia2.26175>

Effect of dolutegravir on folate, vitamin B12 and mean corpuscular volume levels among children and adolescents with HIV: a sub-study of the ODYSSEY randomized controlled trial

Journal of the International AIDS Society | 27 September 2023

Linda Namutebi Barlow-Mosha, Grace Miriam Ahimbisibwe, Elizabeth Chappell, Pauline Mary Amuge, Annet Nanduudu, et al.

Dolutegravir-based antiretroviral therapy (ART) is the preferred antiretroviral treatment for children and adolescents living with HIV. A large surveillance study in Botswana previously raised concerns about an association between pre-conception dolutegravir and neural tube defects. Before these concerns were subsequently resolved, we set up a sub-study to look at the effect of dolutegravir on levels of folate and vitamin B12 in children and adolescents within the randomized ODYSSEY trial, as folate and vitamin B12 are known to play a crucial role in neural tube development.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jia2.26174>

Validation of the vaccination attitudes examination scale in a South African context in relation to the COVID-19 vaccine: quantifying dimensionality with bifactor indices

BMC Public Health | 27 September 2023

Anita Padmanabhanunni, Tyrone Brian Pretorius & Serena Ann Isaacs

The COVID-19 pandemic represented a global public health emergency. Existing studies support the view that vaccination and mass immunization are among the most effective means of containing the outbreak and promoting health. However, negative attitudes toward vaccination and the related vaccine hesitancy among many groups have created a significant barrier to effectively managing the health crisis. Having a valid and reliable tool to assess attitudes toward vaccination remains imperative so that factors underlying vaccine refusal can be identified and public health interventions can be facilitated. The current study examined the psychometric properties of the Vaccination Attitudes Examination Scale (VAX) in South Africa.

<https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-023-16803-4>

Agency and role models: do they matter for adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health?

BMC Women's Health | 27 September 2023

Bolatito O. Ogunbiyi, Sarah Baird, Jeffrey B. Bingenheimer & Amita Vyas

Despite recent declines in early childbearing in Ethiopia, improved sexual and reproductive health continues to elude many adolescent girls, partially due to constrained agency and role models. This study examined the relationship between agency, role models and two sexual and reproductive health outcomes, ideal age at childbirth and attitude towards gender-differentiated parental control, among adolescent girls in Ethiopia. Agency and role model presence were positively associated with ideal age at childbirth.

<https://bmcmomenshealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12905-023-02659-8>

Estimating prevalence and modelling correlates of HIV test positivity among female sex workers, men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, transgender people and prison inmates in Sierra Leone, 2021

Aids Research and Therapy | 27 September 2023

Duah Dwomoh, Issata Wurie, Yvonne Harding, Kojo Mensah Sedzro, Joseph Kandeh, et al.

Key populations (KPs) are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection and efforts to prevent HIV infections among KPs have been less successful, largely due to existing laws and legislation that classify the groups as illegal. Understanding the HIV infection pathway and the burden of HIV infection among Female Sex Workers (FSWs), Transgender people (TG), Men who have sex with Men (MSM), People who Inject Drugs (PWID), and Prison Inmates (PIs) is critical to combatting the HIV epidemic globally.

<https://aidsrestherapy.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12981-023-00566-4>

Correction to: Acceptance of COVID-19 vaccination among parents of children with autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders in Saudi Arabia: a cross-sectional study

BMC Public Health | 28 September 2023

Ali Jawad Al Saad, Mohammed Ghadeer Alhassan, Maryam Saleh, Fatimah Fathi Alqattan, Fatimah Ali

Acceptance of COVID-19 vaccination was noticed to be less common among parents of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other neurodevelopmental disorders. This study aimed to explore the beliefs and willingness of parents of children with neurodevelopmental disorders about COVID-19 vaccine and understand how certain factors influencing the vaccine decision-making process differ between them and other parents' groups.

<https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-023-16127-3>

RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

TB talks: Will #UNGA78 change these three lives?

Bhekisisa | 22 September 2023

Despite progress in tackling tuberculosis (TB) in the five years since the last high-level meeting at the United Nations General Assembly in 2018, none of the targets set out then have been met. Governments have, for instance, not spent close to the amount of money they said they'd spend on TB.

<https://bhekisisa.org/article/2023-09-22-tb-talks-will-unga78-change-these-three-lives/>

SA needs more programmes to address foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, say experts

Daily Maverick | 22 September 2023

September is Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Month. South Africa has the highest prevalence of FASD in the world, and experts have called for more education, support and prevention programmes to address the problem.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-09-22-foetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder-sa-needs-to-do-more/>

PrEP use in pregnancy doesn't raise the risk of adverse pregnancy or birth outcomes

AIDS Map | 22 September 2023

Oral PrEP consisting of tenofovir disoproxil (TDF) and emtricitabine taken during pregnancy does not increase the risk of adverse pregnancy or birth outcomes such as low birth weight, miscarriage or neonatal death, a South African study reports in the journal AIDS.

<https://www.aidsmap.com/news/sep-2023/prep-use-pregnancy-doesnt-raise-risk-adverse-pregnancy-or-birth-outcomes>

Unprecedented TB Drugs Stock-Out in India: Union Health Minister Skips UN High-Level Meet

The Wire | 22 September 2023

Mumbai/New Delhi: As the high-level meeting on tuberculosis (TB) at the United Nations' headquarters begins on September 22, the stakeholders will need to address a pressing issue: that patients in India – which has the highest burden of drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB) – are facing an acute shortage of the necessary medicines. This is forcing many to skip their doses, a choice strongly discouraged in any tuberculosis elimination programme.

<https://thewire.in/health/will-the-un-high-level-meeting-address-indias-problem-of-tb-drugs-stock-out-situation>

CHATBOTS FOR MEDICAL ADVICE: THREE WAYS TO AVOID MISLEADING INFORMATION

Health-e News | 22 September 2023

We expect medical professionals to give us reliable information about ourselves and potential treatments so that we can make informed decisions about which (if any) medicine or other intervention we need. If your doctor instead “bullshits” you (yes – this term has been used in academic publications to refer to persuasion without regard for truth, and not as a swear word) under the deception of authoritative medical advice, the decisions you make could be based on faulty evidence and may result in harm or even death.

<https://health-e.org.za/2023/09/22/chatbots-for-medical-advice-three-ways-to-avoid-misleading-information/>

Opinion: Better data and transparency needed if we are to live up to TB rhetoric at UN

Spotlight | 22 September 2023

There is a renewed global commitment to tackle tuberculosis (TB) from global leaders who are meeting in New York today for the United Nations High-Level Meeting on TB. The meeting is the second of its kind which, this year, also had a day dedicated to discussing universal health coverage and another for pandemic preparedness.

<https://www.spotlightnsp.co.za/2023/09/22/opinion-better-data-and-transparency-needed-if-we-are-to-live-up-to-tb-rhetoric-at-un/>

Call for Greater Efforts to Find Tuberculosis Vaccine at UN High-Level Meeting

Health Policy Watch | 22 September 2023

An emotional Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), revealed that her father had died of tuberculosis (TB) as she thanked advocates for their work to secure the adoption of the UN political declaration on TB at the high-level meeting (HLM) on Friday.

<https://healthpolicy-watch.news/call-for-greater-efforts-to-find-tuberculosis-vaccine-at-un-high-level-meeting/>

New insights could lead to better methods of reducing mosquito-borne viruses

IOL | 23 September 2023

Researchers from the Johns Hopkins Malaria Research Institute at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health have made an important discovery about *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, which could one day lead to better methods for reducing mosquito-to-human transmission of dengue, yellow fever, Zika, and other potentially fatal viruses.

<https://www.iol.co.za/lifestyle/health/new-insights-could-lead-to-better-methods-of-reducing-mosquito-borne-viruses-8f1826c7-a402-54df-9618-75c64113b05d>

The Conversation | 24 September 2023

Ending the AIDS pandemic – particularly in eastern and southern Africa – cannot be achieved unless more resources are channelled to meet the needs of key vulnerable populations. This is one of the themes that emerged during an AIDS conference in June in South Africa. Prejudice against particular groups – such as men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender communities – interferes with treatment regimes and people’s adherence to treatment. These groups are also at higher risk from HIV due to increased levels of stigma, discrimination, violence and criminalisation.

<https://theconversation.com/young-people-with-sexual-or-gender-diversity-are-at-higher-risk-of-stopping-their-hiv-treatment-because-of-stigma-and-harsh-laws-213085>

The best way to prevent HIV is often out of reach for women and marginalized people

Penn Today | 25 September 2023

The United States has a proven treatment to reduce HIV infection risk by up to 99%. The health system just needs to get better at offering it. In 2021, the country had more than 36,000 new HIV diagnoses, yet PrEP (HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis) is used by fewer than 1 in 4 people who would benefit from it. PrEP is preventive medicine—like statins to avoid heart disease—for HIV-negative people who risk infection through sex or drug use. Efforts to expand PrEP use include the U.S. Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) initiative to reduce new HIV infections by 90% by 2030.

<https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/penn-ldi-best-way-prevent-hiv-often-out-reach-women-and-marginalized-people>

Mabule village residents call on Dept of Health to open their clinic everyday

SABC News | 24 September 2023

Residents of Mabule village, outside Mahikeng in the North West, have called on the Health Department to open their clinic 24 hours, seven days a week. They say their clinic only operates from

eight to four during the week and it's closed on weekends. They say patients have to travel from far away places to get medical care.

<https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/mabule-village-residents-call-on-dept-of-health-to-open-their-clinic-everyday/>

Uptake and Persistence on HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis Among Female Sex Workers and Men Having Sex with Men in Kigali, Rwanda: A Retrospective Cross-Sectional Study Design

Dovepress | 25 September 2023

Rugira E, Biracyaza E and Umubyeyi A

Although HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is known for its effectiveness in preventing HIV transmission; there is a global rise in HIV infection rates, particularly prominent in sub-Saharan Africa. This health concern is mostly evident among high-risk groups, namely Female Sex Workers (FSWs) and Men who have Sex with Men (MSMs), both of whom are more susceptible to sexually transmissible infections. This research examined the persistence, uptake, and associated predictors of PrEP utilization within the FSW and MSM populations.

<https://www.dovepress.com/uptake-and-persistence-on-hiv-pre-exposure-prophylaxis-among-female-se-peer-reviewed-fulltext-article-PPA>

HIV vaccine trial begins enrollment in U.S., South Africa

LabPulse | 25 September 2023

A clinical trial for a preventive HIV vaccine has begun enrollment in both the U.S. and South Africa. The phase I trial will evaluate the vaccine candidate known as VIR-1388 for safety and efficacy in inducing an HIV-specific immune response in participants. The trial, HVTN 142, is sponsored by Vir Biotechnology. It is being conducted through the HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN), which is funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) of the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

<https://www.labpulse.com/diseases/infectious/hiv/article/15635045/hiv-vaccine-trial-begins-enrollment-in-us-and-south-africa>

Breast cancer drug Piqray linked to high blood sugar levels

UPI | 25 September 2023

For certain patients with advanced breast cancer, a drug called Piqray (alpelisib) may extend survival. But new research confirms the medication often causes seriously high blood sugar levels. "This is a very effective drug that we should be using to treat breast cancer, but the problem is that it causes high blood sugar, which also can decrease the efficacy of the medication," explained study co-author Dr. Neil Iyengar. He is a medical oncologist at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City.

https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2023/09/25/breast-cancer-drug-blood-sugar/2791695660884/

Young people with sexual or gender diversity are at higher risk of stopping their HIV treatment because of stigma and harsh laws

The Conversation | 25 September 2023

Ending the AIDS pandemic – particularly in eastern and southern Africa – cannot be achieved unless more resources are channelled to meet the needs of key vulnerable populations.

<https://theconversation.com/young-people-with-sexual-or-gender-diversity-are-at-higher-risk-of-stopping-their-hiv-treatment-because-of-stigma-and-harsh-laws-213085>

Long-acting injectable version of the most popular HIV drug combination is possible

AIDS Map | 26 September 2023

Researchers at the University of Washington in Seattle say they have cracked the challenge of creating a long-acting injectable form of the world's most commonly prescribed antiretroviral combination, tenofovir disoproxil fumarate, lamivudine and dolutegravir, often known as TLD.

<https://www.aidsmap.com/news/sep-2023/long-acting-injectable-version-most-popular-hiv-drug-combination-possible>

The importance of being Brimey

Bhekisisa | 26 September 2023

In June 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 crisis, Ebrahim Variava, head of internal medicine at the Tshepong Hospital in Klerksdorp, was suspended for criticising how the facility dealt with the health emergency. Variava is not scared to speak out against the ills of a broken public health sector, and growing up on the same street as Zackie Achmat, putting the plight of people first is in his blood. Meet the doctor whose passion for his patients is as fiery as his bright red scrubs — and who will work “outside the box” to ensure people get the right care.

<https://bhekisisa.org/article/profiles/2023-09-26-the-importance-of-being-brimey/>

South Africa hit by lethal avian flu outbreak

Times Live | 26 September 2023

South Africa is dealing with an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) with 50 confirmed cases of the HPAI H7 and 10 of the HPAI H5 strains, the department of agriculture, land reform & rural development says.

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2023-09-26-south-africa-hit-by-lethal-avian-flu-outbreak/>

South Africa: 'Walk in Healthy and Get Wheeled Out Sick'

allAfrica | 26 September 2023

An investigation has been launched into the Livingstone Hospital in Gqeberha after one patient died and five others have been treated for infections after undoing surgeries. An otherwise healthy 26-year-old Andiswa Vulani lost her life in June this year after an appendicitis operation turned septic. Since then, at least five more people have come forward, claiming to have had similar experiences. Vulani was admitted to Livingstone on 22 March after complaining of intense stomach pains. She was

treated for appendicitis and underwent an operation. She had to remain in hospital for the following month after her wound became septic.

<https://allafrica.com/stories/202309260029.html>

Older Women Have High Rate of Breast Cancer Overdiagnosis

AJMC | 26 September 2023

A high rate of overdiagnosis of breast cancer was seen in a retrospective cohort analysis that examined recent cancer screening results among women 70 years and older,¹ indicating the potential harm to women of frequent false positive results that could lead to unnecessary invasive procedures for a cancer not likely to be symptomatic in their lifetime. “No randomized trials have evaluated screening mammography in women 75 years and older, and only a few studies have included women over the age of 70 years, leaving uncertainty about benefits and harms of screening in older women,” the study authors wrote in *Annals of Internal Medicine*. “In recent years, there has also been greater recognition that overdiagnosis constitutes an important harm from breast cancer screening.”

<https://www.ajmc.com/view/older-women-have-high-rate-of-breast-cancer-overdiagnosis>

Mixed reactions over Gauteng jobs campaign and what it may mean for health

Spotlight | 26 September 2023

In June this year, the Gauteng government launched a major recruitment drive called Nasi iSpani. As explained on Business Live by Gauteng Premier Panyaza Lesufi, the Nasi iSpani programme is part of “Growing Gauteng Together 2030”, a strategy adopted in 2019 to create an economically inclusive Gauteng city region. “We want to position the province as a place of opportunities and grow its economy from R1.7 trillion to R3 trillion, halving unemployment to reach 15% by the end of the decade,” wrote Lesufi.

<https://www.spotlightnsp.co.za/2023/09/26/mixed-reactions-over-gauteng-jobs-campaign-and-what-it-may-mean-for-health/>

‘Feminist approach’ to cancer could save lives of 800,000 women a year

The Guardian | 26 September 2023

Health experts are calling for a “feminist approach” to cancer to eliminate inequalities, as research reveals 800,000 women worldwide are dying needlessly every year because they are denied optimal care. Cancer is one of the biggest killers of women and ranks in their top three causes of premature deaths in almost every country on every continent. But gender inequality and discrimination are reducing women’s opportunities to avoid cancer risks and impeding their ability to get a timely diagnosis and quality care, according to a report published in the *Lancet*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/sep/26/feminist-approach-cancer-save-lives-800000-women>

Cities leading the way to achieving key targets in the HIV response

UNAIDS | 27 September 2023

Gathered in Amsterdam for the annual Fast-Track Cities conference between 25 – 27 September 2023, cities shared their various initiatives toward achieving key HIV targets.

In Nairobi, Kenya a situation analysis conducted at a granular level helped the county to better understand the gaps in the HIV response and to identify priority actions. The data showed that there was a lack of in health service points, especially for key populations and young people living in informal settlements. In addition, stigma and discrimination also keeps people away. Zipporah Achieng, a young person living with HIV navigating the dusty streets of Kibera, one of several informal settlements, can attest to this. “Before, life was not easy, the healthcare workers were not well trained, and when they saw youth coming to the hospital, they would start judging them, discriminating them.”

https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2023/september/20230927_cities-leading-the-way

ROBBED, KIDNAPPED AND HIJACKED: THE PERILOUS TASK OF SOUTH AFRICA’S PARAMEDICS

Health-e News | 27 September 2023

“We do not expect to be robbed or held at gunpoint while saving lives,” says Levy Leburu, an emergency medical services (EMS) worker based in Jouberton near Klerksdorp in the North West province. In August he started an online petition to raise awareness about the ongoing and targeted attacks of paramedics – and other healthcare workers. “I am concerned about our safety. When you are responding to a life-threatening situation, the last thing that you want to worry about is your safety. We need people to know what is going on because there aren’t enough police [officers] out there to escort all the ambulances,” says Leburu.

<https://health-e.org.za/2023/09/27/robbed-kidnapped-and-hijacked-the-perilous-task-of-south-africas-paramedics/>

A ‘malaria emergency’ is in the making. Here’s why

Bhekisisa | 27 September 2023

Africa has the most cases of malaria in the world, and 96% of the deaths from the disease occur on the continent. Progress on getting rid of the disease has gone backwards in 13 countries and stalled in other nations in Africa. Last week, political leaders at the United Nations General Assembly called for action to get us back on track to wipe out the disease by 2030.

<https://bhekisisa.org/health-news-south-africa/2023-09-27-a-malaria-emergency-is-in-the-making-heres-why/>

Five Tips for Talking With a Health Care Provider About Your Mental Health

Poz | 27 September 2023

Don’t wait for a health care provider to ask about your mental health. Start the conversation. Here are five tips to help prepare and guide you on talking to a health care provider about your mental health and getting the most out of your visit. 1. Talk to a Primary Care Provider. If you don’t know where to start for help, you may want to consider bringing up your mental health concerns during your appointment with a primary care provider (PCP). A PCP is a health care practitioner people see

for common medical problems, and this person is often a doctor. However, a PCP may be a physician assistant or a nurse practitioner.

<https://www.poz.com/article/five-tips-talking-health-care-provider-mental-health>

Study finds potential way to tweak immune system to help it fight tuberculosis

Medical Xpress | 27 September 2023

Tuberculosis is old—ancient even. The infectious bacterial disease that plagued Old Testament Israelites and took down pharaohs was eventually stunted by vaccinations, antibiotics, and public health measures like isolation, but it hasn't been cured yet. More than a million people around the world still die from TB every year. Now, a Boston University-led research team has found a way to tweak immune cells to better fight the disease and—with the right backing—they say it could be ready for clinical trials as soon as 2024.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-09-potential-tweak-immune-tuberculosis.html>

Women in Africa Prefer Long-Acting PrEP Over Pills

Poz | 27 September 2023

A majority of women in the HPTN 084 trial, which compared injectable cabotegravir versus daily oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), chose the long-acting option, according to study findings presented at the International AIDS Society Conference on HIV Science (IAS 2023). “These results suggest that long-acting PrEP could have a huge prevention impact in Africa, where uptake of daily oral PrEP has been disappointingly low,” IAS president Sharon Lewin, MD, of the University of Melbourne, said in a news release. “I hope these findings will accelerate momentum to make long-acting PrEP accessible to all those who need it.”

<https://www.poz.com/article/women-africa-prefer-longacting-prep-pills>

Many in Eastern Cape still denied health services despite some improvements, report finds

Spotlight | 27 September 2023

A woman in her forties who is living with HIV says she was denied services at a public healthcare facility because she didn't have a transfer letter, resulting in her treatment being interrupted. She says she also developed mental health problems. (Spotlight knows the identity of the woman, but is withholding it since she does not wish her HIV status to be made public.)

<https://www.spotlightnsp.co.za/2023/09/27/many-in-eastern-cape-still-denied-health-services-despite-some-improvements-report-finds/>

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.

<https://www.hst.org.za/Pages/Subscription.aspx>

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!

<https://www.hst.org.za/Pages/Subscription.aspx>

The NDoH and CSIR Call for Book Chapters

The Emerging South African National Digital Health System: Strategies, Approaches and Experiences

About

The book, a collaboration between NDoH and CSIR, aims to showcase strategies and experiences in developing a National Health Information System that facilitates efficient, personalized healthcare information transfer across various boundaries. Undergoing a double-blind peer review and editing, it serves as a detailed guide to the evolving South African National Digital Health System, reflecting on the substantial research and strategies that have influenced its formation, with a focus on the scholarly depth and validity of the results.

Each chapter, contributing to an enriched discussion, will dissect a specific facet of the system, assisting readers in understanding its integral components and the ensuing challenges and opportunities within the South African Health Ecosystem. Contributions from several authors are encouraged, bringing in diverse perspectives and firsthand experiences to foster a comprehensive narrative on the system's ongoing improvements in the context of South African Digital Health. Opinion pieces in line with the NHI, Digital Health Strategy, and efforts to strengthen the Health System are welcome. Further details can be found in the Submission Guidelines.

IMPORTANT DATES

- SEPTEMBER, 2023: Presentations
- 22 OCTOBER, 2023: Abstract submissions
- 20 NOVEMBER, 2023: Abstract feedback
- 8 FEBRUARY, 2024: Submission of full paper for review
- 15 MARCH, 2024: Final corrected paper submission

SUBMISSION LINK - <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=sadhs24>

Any queries and abstract submissions to: digitalhealth@health.gov.za

Subject: SA National Digital Health System Book

ABSTRACT FORMAT

- Title of the Chapter
- Purpose
- Study design/methodology/approach
- Findings
- Originality/value

- Keywords Author/s

The Public Health Association of South Africa (PHASA) – calling all public health champions!

PHASA is a voluntary organisation of individuals passionate about population health improvements and the reduction of health inequities, and whose work focuses on the prevention of disease, the promotion of health, and the improved functioning of the country's health care system. Are you passionate about improving the health and wellbeing of communities? Do you want to expand your professional network and stay current in the field of public health? Do you want to be part of the movement to improve Public Health? Then join the Public Health Association of South Africa today to make a difference and enhance your career!

As a member, you will:

- Gain access to cutting-edge research, resources, and best practices
- Connect with public health professionals from around the country
- Participate in educational events and conferences
- Contribute to shaping the future of public health
- Have access to mentors in the field
- Be at the forefront of advocacy initiatives.

To become a member, simply visit our [website](https://phasa.org.za/index.php/get-involved/membership) and complete the membership application. Don't miss this opportunity to advance your career and improve public health.

<https://phasa.org.za/index.php/get-involved/membership>

THE OLIVER TAMBO FELLOWSHIP (OTFP) PROGRAMME: A POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN HEALTH LEADERSHIP

An Opportunity to Grow

- To HR components - This value-for-money health leadership programme directly relates to the manager's workplace within the health system. Acquired skills and competencies have been well-researched. Nominating people from the same team offers the possibility of greater impact, including across successive cohorts.
- To Line managers - Students develop capabilities to lead and to bring improvements in their workplaces. Nominate teams.
- To Health Care Workers and Health System Influencers - Invest in yourself to show up as a leader who lead with confidence.

Why the OTFP?

- Affiliated to the internationally renowned University of Cape Town.
- Proudly bears the name of an exceptional African Leader.
- Nearly 30 years' experience of growing health leaders.
- Offers a unique perspective on leadership, rooted in systems thinking & policy analysis, tailored to the complex challenges of our health system.

What Does the Programme Entail?

- Four sequenced and interrelated 6-day learning blocks, covering:
 - The complex nature of health systems and their challenges.
 - Leading everyday health system strengthening.
 - Engaging health system hard- and software resources for implementing improvement.
 - Sustaining workplace-based interventions for system improvement.
 - Mentorship during and after the course.
 - Direct engagement with senior health leaders, other experts with national and international insights, as well as peer leaders.

What Will You Learn?

- Personal, relational, and technical competencies to lead across the system complexities.
- How to show up as a leader for your team and the wider system.

Who Should Attend?

- Mid- and senior level leaders (managers and clinicians) in the public health sector.
- Mid- and senior level leaders in NGOs and the private sector with public value goals.
- Teams of leaders from the same setting.

Fees and Registration

- The fees for 2024/25 intake is approximately R65 505, thus an average cost of R32 500 per year.
- Students arrange own travel and accommodation.
- Registration open until 9 December 2023.
- The course commences in February 2024.
- How to register? Apply online by clicking on [Application Link](#)

Contact

- Contact Fahiema.titus@uct.ac.za or the Program Convener at Maylene.shungking@uct.ac.za or visit us at <https://health.uct.ac.za/school-public-health>

PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

The 2022 South African Health Review is available!

We are pleased to release the 25th edition of the South African Health Review (SAHR). Entitled 'health systems strengthening after COVID-19', the journal provides valuable insights and recommendations on how to improve the response to the pandemic and build more resilient health systems.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the world, and the health sector has been at the forefront of the response. Curated as a supplement to the 2021 edition, which addressed the response of government and the broader health sector to COVID-19, the 2022 South African Health Review provides a platform for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to share their experiences and insights on how they navigated this crisis and build more robust health systems for the future.

The journal encompasses a diverse array of subjects, including reflections on the work of the Ministerial Advisory Committee during COVID-19 and the knowledge gained and lessons learned from these processes. Additionally, it explores the ramifications of COVID-19 on maternal, women, and child health and highlights the gendered implications of the pandemic, revealing that women experienced more pronounced effects of stress, fear, and depression during the lockdown period compared to men.

Commenting on its release, CEO and co-editor of the Review Dr Themba Moeti said that “This edition of the South African Health Review offers promising examples of COVID-19 response, mitigation and recovery strategies for us to use the emerging lessons to enhance our health system resilience and better prepare for future pandemics.”

Strong messages emerging from this edition emphasise that in order to effectively promote national vaccination programmes, it is imperative to equip healthcare workers (HCWs) with comprehensive, relevant, and current information. This will enable them to enhance patient communication and increase vaccine acceptance. Subsequent chapters delineate an inventive collaboration between the public and private sectors aimed at mitigating the accumulated volume of elective surgical procedures at Groote Schuur Hospital and reflect on the importance of consulting, involving and deploying community based organisations such as clinic committees in public health emergencies from the outset.

The crucial importance of inter-country collaboration is emphasised in mitigating disease transmission and impact, with authors advocating for a more coordinated approach to managing cross-border health measures.

Additionally, the Review highlights the intersection between climate change and health systems and reinforces the imperative to prioritise health within the framework of a 'just transition' and to enhance the capabilities of healthcare systems to be low-carbon and climate-resilient as crucial focal points for improving pandemic preparedness.

For more information on the journal and to access the latest edition, visit <https://www.hst.org.za/publications/Pages/SAHR2022.aspx>

CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Critical Care Society of SA Congress

When: 12-15 October 2023

Where: Boardwalk Convention Centre, Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth)

For more information, go to: <https://criticalcare.org.za/event/save-the-date-ccssa-congress-2023/>

13th World Congress of the World Society for Pediatric Infectious Diseases (WSPID)

When: 12-17 November 2023

Where: Durban ICC, Durban

For more information, go to: <https://www.emedevents.com/medical-hybrid-events-2023/13th-world-congress-of-the-world-society-for-pediatric-infectious-diseases-wspid>

World Congress of Epidemiology – WCE 2024 – 24 to 27 September 2024

WCE is well-known for bringing epidemiologists and public health experts working in different sectors together in an atmosphere designed to promote dialogue, the interchange of ideas, and state-of-the-art scientific research. The theme of WCE2024 is “**Epidemiology and complexity: challenges and responses**” which will engage the full depth and breadth of methods and practice in contemporary epidemiology. The meeting will feature top-calibre invited speakers presenting plenary lectures, workshops and interactive sessions. The abstract-driven programme will include oral and poster presentations including theory and application from every sub-discipline of epidemiology. With more than 1000 delegates expected, WCE2024 promises to be a unique opportunity to share experiences and expertise – the opportunities to learn, grow and network within the field will be phenomenal. This is the first time the congress will be hosted on the African continent and the Cape Town International Convention Centre provides a world-class venue for this meeting.

<https://www.wce2024.org/>

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officers

Closing date: 2 October 2023

[https://www.hst.org.za/Pages/MONITORING-AND-EVALUATION-\(ME\)-OFFICER.aspx](https://www.hst.org.za/Pages/MONITORING-AND-EVALUATION-(ME)-OFFICER.aspx)

District Training Co-Ordinator

Closing date: 6 October 2023

<https://www.hst.org.za/Pages/District-Training-Co-Ordinator0922-8725.aspx>