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ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

Symptomatic gallstones and HIV in black South African women: Changing trends of gallstone disease?

South African Journal of HIV Medicine | 25 March 2021

Suman Kinoo, Savania Nagiah, Anil Chuturgoon, Bhugwan Singh

South Africa (SA) has a population of 57.7 million. It is estimated that 7.52 million (13.1%) are people living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV; PLWH). Close to 26% of South African PLWH reside in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Of South African PLWH, 3.9 million (52%) are on antiretroviral therapy (ART). Most gallstone research is performed in Europe and South America. A paucity of data comes from Africa. This oversight may, in part, be because of the historically low incidence of gallstone disease (GD) amongst black South Africans, and/or a focus on other concurrent health crises, such as HIV, maternal death, malnutrition and other non-communicable diseases.

Vitamin D supplementation to prevent acute respiratory infections: a systematic review and meta-analysis of aggregate data from randomised controlled trials

The Lancet: Diabetes and Endocrinology | 30 March 2021

David Jolliffe, Carlos Camargo, John Sluyter, Mary Aglipay, John Aloia et al.

Interest in the potential for vitamin D supplementation to reduce the risk of acute respiratory infections (ARIs) has increased since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. This interest stems from findings of laboratory studies showing that vitamin D metabolites support innate immune responses to respiratory viruses, together with observational studies reporting independent associations between low circulating concentrations of 25-hydroxyvitamin D (25[OH]D), the widely accepted biomarker of vitamin D status, and increased risk of ARI caused by other pathogens. Randomised controlled trials (RCTs) of vitamin D supplementation for the prevention of ARI have produced heterogeneous results, with some showing protection, and others reporting null findings.

The Loneliness–Life Satisfaction Relationship: The Parallel and Serial Mediating Role of Hopelessness, Depression and Ego-Resilience among Young Adults in South Africa during COVID-19

MDPI | 31 March 2021

Anita Padmanabhanunni and Tyrone Pretorius

Recently, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, several lockdown and stay-at-home regulations have been implemented worldwide. In this regard, loneliness has been identified as the signature mental health consequence of this pandemic. The aim of this study is to explore the associations among loneliness, hopelessness, depression, ego-resilience and life satisfaction in a random sample of young adults (N = 337) at a university in the Western Cape of South Africa. Parallel and serial mediation analysis supported the hypothesis that loneliness is associated with hopelessness, which in turn is associated with depression, and that ego-resilience mediates the association between all the negative indices of psychological well-being and life satisfaction. These findings suggest that mental health interventions that boost ego-resilience and target loneliness may help in dealing with the mental health consequences of COVID-19.

What Are LGBT+ Inequalities in Health and Social Support—Why Should We Tackle Them?

MDPI | 31 March 2021

Julie Fish, Kathryn Almack, Trish Hafford-Letchfield, Michael Toze

Health inequalities are differences in health experiences and outcomes which arise through the everyday circumstances of people's lives and the appropriateness of the systems put in place to support them. Such differences stem from social inequalities. As they can be alleviated through social policy, they are a key concern for global public health. Worldwide, they are the focus of governmental efforts to reduce avoidable differences in health (e.g., in the UK, Health equity in England 2020 and in the USA, Healthy People 2030). The salience of health inequalities in public life cannot be over-emphasized; for example, it has informed policymaking since Engels' 1845 ground-breaking text on the condition of the working class in England and numerous policy initiatives since then (e.g., in the UK, The Black Report 1979, The Acheson Inquiry 1998, Fair Society, Healthy Lives 2010).

Turning threats into opportunities: how to implement and advance quality TB services for people with HIV during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond

Journal of the International Aids Society | 31 Marc 2021

Teri Roberts, Suvanand Sahu, James Malar, Timur Abdullaev, Wim Vandeveldel et al.

Until COVID-19, tuberculosis (TB) was the leading infectious disease killer globally, including among people with HIV, who are disproportionately affected by TB. In 2019, at least 1.2 million people died from TB, of which 12% were children and 208,000 had HIV, reflecting a third of AIDS deaths. The Political Declaration on the Fight against Tuberculosis resulting from the United Nations High Level Meeting (UNHLM) on TB in September 2018 committed world leaders to a number of targets by 2022, including prioritizing high-risk populations, which include people with HIV, and providing TB preventive treatment (TPT) to six million people with HIV, with the latter insufficiently ambitious and warranting review. Thus, successfully reaching the targets of ending TB and ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 are clearly intertwined.

Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on maternal and perinatal outcomes: a systematic review and meta-analysis

The Lancet Global Health | 31 March 2021

Barbara Chmielewska, Imogen Barratt, Rosemary Townsend, Erkan Kalafat, Prof Jan van der Meulen, et al.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on health-care systems and potentially on pregnancy outcomes, but no systematic synthesis of evidence of this effect has been undertaken. The study aimed to assess the collective evidence on the effects on maternal, fetal, and neonatal outcomes of the pandemic.

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RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

Diabetes drug appears to exploit vulnerability of AIDS-causing retrovirus HIV

News Medical | 29 March 2021

A team led by scientists at the UNC School of Medicine discovered an important vulnerability of the AIDS-causing retrovirus HIV, and has shown in preclinical experiments that a widely used diabetes drug, metformin, seems able to exploit this vulnerability. The scientists, whose study is published in *Nature Immunology*, found that HIV, when it infects immune cells called CD4 T cells, helps fuel its own replication by boosting a key process in the cells' production of chemical energy. They also found that the diabetes drug metformin inhibits the same process and thereby suppresses HIV replication in these cells, in both cell-culture and mouse experiments.

What's the Cost of Getting the Global AIDS Strategy on Track by 2025?

POZI | 30 March 2021

The Joint United Nations Programme on AIDS (UNAIDS) has released a new global AIDS strategy for the next five years. The plan sets targets and lays out policies that will not only help end AIDS as a global health threat by 2030 but also get those efforts back on track after the setbacks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. What's more, the plan focuses on health equity by taking aim at the inequalities that fuel the HIV/AIDS epidemic. For the strategy to succeed, it will cost an estimated \$29 billion a year, according to a press release on the report by UNAIDS.

Global leaders unite in urgent call for international pandemic treaty

WHO | 30 March 2021

The international community should work together "towards a new international treaty for pandemic preparedness and response" to build a more robust global health architecture that will protect future generations, world leaders said in a commentary published today in several newspapers around the world. "There will be other pandemics and other major health emergencies. No single government or multilateral agency can address this threat alone," the leaders say in their article. "The question is not if, but when. Together, we must be better prepared to predict, prevent, detect, assess and effectively respond to pandemics in a highly coordinated fashion. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a stark and painful reminder that nobody is safe until everyone is safe."

WHO experts say COVID probably came to humans from animals

EWN | 30 March 2021

A team of international experts will present details on Tuesday of their findings from a mission to China, which concluded COVID-19 probably passed to humans from a bat via an intermediary animal, all but ruling out a laboratory leak. But the report, drafted by World Health Organization-appointed international experts and their Chinese counterparts, offers no definitive answers on how the new coronavirus jumped to humans. AFP obtained a copy of the final report ahead of its official publication on Tuesday.

3 ways another Covid wave could hit South Africa: Discovery

BusinessTech | 31 March 2021

Medical aid Discovery Health has published three scenarios that detail when and where a third wave of Covid-19 infections could impact South Africa. Discovery said that the scenarios are based on an analysis of its 3.7 million medical scheme beneficiaries, around 7% of the country's population. "It is in our hands to save lives. Our personal behaviour, and that of the people around us, will be a large determinant of which scenario our country experiences," said Ryan Noach, chief executive of Discovery Health.

Court to rule on Ivermectin use for Covid-19

IOL | 31 March 2021

The public will finally know tomorrow exactly how they will be able to use ivermectin if they so wish in the treatment of Covid-19. Various parties, including AfriForum and Pretoria East medical doctor George Coetzee, fought in the Gauteng High Court, Pretoria, for the legal use of the so-called 'wonder drug' in combating the virus. Settlements were reached in the four different applications before court yesterday with the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (Sahpra). But Judge Cassim Sardiwalla called the parties to chambers later, as he wanted them to negotiate one consolidated order rather than four different orders on the same subject.

Opinion: Longer HIV treatment supplies can support better long term adherence

Spotlight | 31 March 2021

Over the past decade, South Africa's HIV response has come a long way. However, more than 2.3 million people living with HIV in South Africa are still not on lifesaving antiretroviral treatment (ART) — either because they do not know their HIV status, or more worryingly having been diagnosed with HIV and possibly having started treatment and then stopped. One of the biggest challenges now facing South Africa's HIV response is how to support many more people living with HIV to engage or re-engage and then stay on treatment.

What is herd immunity anyway? Here's how many people South Africa should vaccinate

Bhekisisa | 1 April 2021

Herd immunity means that enough people are protected from a disease, such as COVID-19, so that it can no longer spread within a population. People can gain immunity in two ways. They can get infected with the virus and build up natural immunity, or they can get immunity by being vaccinated. The government estimates that 67% of South Africa would need to have immunity to stop COVID from spreading.

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TRAINING AND RESOURCES

Cochrane Clinical Answers

Cochrane Clinical Answers (CCAs) provide a readable, digestible, clinically focused entry point to rigorous research from Cochrane Reviews. They are designed to be actionable and to inform point-of-care decision-making. CCAs form a key strand of Cochrane's Knowledge Translation strategy, providing concise, evidence-based answers to Patient, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome (PICO) clinical questions based on Cochrane Reviews. The product was developed in partnership between Cochrane and Wiley and in 2018 became part of the suite of databases available to all Cochrane Library subscribers.

Health Equity Assessment Toolkit

The Health Equity Assessment Toolkit is a software application that facilitates the assessment of within-country health inequalities. It was developed for use on desktop or laptop computers and mobile devices (minimum screen size of 7.9 inches recommended).

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PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

Deloitte's 2021 Global Health Care Outlook

A number of foundational shifts are arising from and being exacerbated by COVID-19's spread. Examples include consumers' increasing involvement in health care decision-making; the rapid adoption of virtual health and other digital innovations; the push for interoperable data and data analytics use; and unprecedented public-private collaborations in vaccine and therapeutics development. Amid these dynamics, governments, health care providers, payers, and other stakeholders around the globe are being challenged to quickly pivot, adapt, and innovate. In our 2021 Global Health Care Outlook, we look in detail at six issues driving change in the health care sector and present questions and actions health leaders should consider in the coming year. How stakeholders analyze, understand, and respond to these issues will shape their ability to navigate from recovering to thriving in the post-pandemic "new normal" and advance their journey along the path to the Future of Health.

COVID-19 special public health surveillance bulletin

These special issues will serve as a vehicle for the critical analysis of current and retrospective COVID-19 disease incidence / public health information in South Africa. Various manuscript types will be considered

for publication including surveillance and outbreak reports, reviews, case studies and clinical guidelines. With these special issues, we aim for rapid review and publication of accepted manuscripts so that pertinent information can be distributed timeously.

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CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Webinar: reINVENT & reBUILD - stronger, fairer more inclusive physical activity systems for all

This WHO webinar is held to celebrate the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (IDSDP) on 6 April 2021. This webinar will discuss the importance of physical activity and sport for mental and physical health for people of all ages and abilities and the challenges and opportunities presented to physical activity and sport system by COVID-19.

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

South African Medical Research Council, Gender and Health Research Unit: Research Technologist – Social Science Research Assistant

Closing Date: 4 April 2021

South African Medical Research Council, Non-Communicable Diseases Research Unit: Specialist Scientist – Food Environment and Dietary Quality

Closing Date: 11 April 2021

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