

HST Bulletin



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ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

The ethics and value of contact tracing apps: International insights and implications for Scotland's COVID-19 response

Claudia Pagliari | 21 July 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has put health systems, economies and societies under unprecedented strain, calling for innovative approaches. Scotland's government, like those elsewhere, is facing difficult decisions about how to deploy digital technologies and data to help contain, control and manage the disease, while also respecting citizens' rights. This paper explores the ethical challenges presented by these methods, with particular emphasis on mobile apps associated with contact tracing. Drawing on UK and international experiences, it examines issues such as public trust, data privacy and technology design; how changing disease threats and contextual factors can affect the balance between public benefits and risks; and the importance of transparency, accountability and stakeholder participation for the trustworthiness and good-governance of digital systems and strategies.

COVID-19: from a PHEIC to a public health mental crisis?

The Lancet Public Health | 23 July 2020

On Jan 30, 2020, the WHO declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC). 6 months later, more than 14 million confirmed cases, more than 600 000 deaths, and unprecedented public health measures are impacting the lives of billions of individuals around the world and all aspects of society. While the focus has been—understandably—on the physical health crisis, the direct and indirect psychological and social effects of the pandemic could be all-pervading. Will the public health emergency of international concern morph into a public mental health crisis?

Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Patients with Convalescent Plasma

The American Journal of Pathology | 1 August 2020

Eric Salazar, Katherine Perez, Madiha Ashraf, Prasanti Yerramilli, Layne Pruitt et al

In convalescent plasma therapy, blood plasma from a recovered patient is collected and transfused to a symptomatic patient. The transfer of convalescent plasma is an old concept, having been used since at least 1918 when it was employed to fight the Spanish flu pandemic. More recently, convalescent plasma

was used with some reported success during the 2003 SARS pandemic, the 2009 influenza H1N1 pandemic, and the 2015 Ebola outbreak in Africa. Several small observational studies published during the COVID-19 pandemic suggest convalescent plasma is part of an effective treatment strategy for patients with severe disease. The first report describing administration of convalescent plasma to five patients early in the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan was recently published. Five critically ill patients received two, same-day infusions from five recovered healthy donors. In four of the five patients, inflammatory biomarkers decreased and Alveolar–arterial (A/a) gradient improved, and all patients had improvement in pulmonary lesions on the basis of computed tomography scan. A second study by Duan et al reported improved clinical outcomes in 10 patients who received a single transfusion of convalescent plasma, with no adverse events reported. Two additional small case studies of five and six patients have since been published with similar findings. A more recent study by Zeng et al suggested that administration of convalescent plasma late in the disease course was ineffective for mortality reduction.

The socioeconomic impact of rural-origin graduates working as healthcare professionals in South Africa

South African Family Practice | 5 August 2019

Richard McGregor, Andrew Ross and Ganzamungu Zihindula

Studies documenting the socioeconomic impact of education leading to employment of rural youth, specifically in the healthcare professions, are lacking. The Umthombo Youth Development Foundation (UYDF) is an NGO that provides financial support for rural students to train as healthcare professionals (HCPs) as a way of addressing staff shortages at rural hospitals. The aim of this study was to understand the social and economic impact on individuals and their families of qualifying as an HCP and being employed at a rural district hospital

Patient-centric research in the time of COVID-19: conducting ethical COVID-19 research in Africa

BMJ Global Health | 6 August 2020

Victoria Nembaware, Nchangwi Munung, Alice Matimba and Nicki Tiffin

Without effective management, COVID-19 could be catastrophic in Africa, exacerbated by high infectious and non-infectious disease burdens, poor healthcare access and limited health resources. Projections estimate over 110 million infections and 300 000 mortalities in sub-Saharan Africa alone. Global evidence identifies contributing risk factors such as age, gender and existing comorbidities, but drivers of disease severity and poor survival in some patients are still unclear. African genetic variation underlies many differences in pathogen susceptibility, disease severity, drug response and patient outcomes compared with rest-of-world populations. African COVID-19 disease profiles may also differ given unique regional environmental challenges, population structure and genetic make-up, and potential proliferation of specific virus strains, limiting transferability of research findings from other continents.

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RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

The Union shares protocol to measure the impact of COVID-19 on people with TB and HIV/AIDS

The Union | 11 August 2020

The Union's Centre for Operational Research has made publicly available **a protocol for a project in sub-Saharan Africa** to determine the impact of COVID-19 on tuberculosis (TB) case detection and HIV testing, diagnosis and care through strengthened real-time surveillance. The Union worked with the national TB and national HIV/AIDS programmes in Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe and with the World Health Organization Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (WHO-TDR) in Geneva and Vital Strategies in USA to develop the protocol. During its inception, other TB and HIV/AIDS programmes around the world expressed interest in conducting similar analyses, and all collaborating partners agreed to make the technical content of this protocol available for others to use.

Global Strategy for TB Research and Innovation is adopted by WHO Member States

The Union | 12 August 2020

The Union welcomes the adoption of the **global strategy for tuberculosis (TB) research and innovation** by Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO) through a written silence procedure of the 73rd session of the World Health Assembly last week. The Union is pleased to note the strategy highlights research that is needs-driven, evidence-based, affordable, accessible, and that has increased focus on involving TB-affected communities in every stage of research.

Russia's Rapid COVID-19 Vaccine Approval Draws Intense Criticism From Some – And Offers To Collaborate From Others

Health Policy Watch | 12 August 2020

Russia's speedy approval of a COVID-19 vaccine on Tuesday has drawn widespread criticism from Health Ministers, researchers, and even a Russian pharma industry group. However, it has also spurred interest and offers to collaborate on testing the new vaccine in other countries, including from quarters as farflung as Israel and the Philippines. The Russian COVID-19 vaccine, dubbed Sputnik V, is the first in the world to receive **national regulatory approval**; it was approved for public use even ahead of its Phase III trial. Additionally, results from earlier clinical trials have not yet been released to the public or the World Health Organization, sparking concerns from many experts that the country is jumping the gun in a bid to showcase Russia's scientific prowess.

Most Sexual & Reproductive Health Research Financing Comes From 3 Major Donors – And COVID-19 Could Further Shrink Funding

Health Policy Watch | 13 August 2020

Funding for research into sexual and reproductive health issues, ranging from HIV/AIDs to pregnancy prevention, comes from only three major donors, and the global recession caused by COVID-19 may shrink the funding landscape further. "There's a clear gap in investment to research and develop new products to meet people's needs in low-resource settings. With a few funders stepping in to fill this gap, there are missed opportunities to make a real impact on the lives of people in LMICs," said Nick Chapman, CEO of **Policy Cures Research**, the group that produces the annual G-FINDER reports. "Looking to the future, not only are unprecedented funding levels being funneled towards COVID-19, but an impending global recession will undoubtedly have an impact on future development funding commitments and available funding to address other global health issues, like SRH," added Chapman, in a **press release**.

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TRAINING AND RESOURCES

Foundational Training for COVID-19 Responders

The Public Health Forum (PHF) USA has launched a free service providing a customized COVID-19 contact tracing curriculum through the TRAIN Learning Network. TRAIN is a US-based learning network that provides quality training opportunities for professionals who protect and improve the public's health. To access the training materials please click on the link below. You will need to create an account.

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PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

District Health Barometer (DHB) Call for Expressions of Interest

Health Systems Trust | Closing date: 28 August 2020

Please click on the link below for more detailed information on the terms of reference.

https://www.hst.org.za/media/Documents/Health%20Systems%20Trust%20DHB%20201920%20Call%20for%20Expressions%20of%20Interest_BEN_FIN.pdf

The South African Health Review (SAHR) 2021 Call for Abstracts is now open!

Health Systems Trust | Closing date: 31 October 2020

Prospective authors are invited to submit abstracts that examine health-sector responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly from the perspectives of strengthening health systems; leadership and

governance; resource allocation and financing; service delivery, human resources, and medical equipment and supplies. Please click on the link below for further details.

<https://www.hst.org.za/media/Pages/SAHR-2021-Call-for-Abstracts.aspx>

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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

HST Corporate Services Directorate, Human Resources Unit – Administrator

Closing date: 20 August 2020

HST Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) Directorate – Lay Counsellors

Closing date: 20 August 2020

HST Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) Directorate – Clinical Advisors

Closing date: 20 August 2020

HST Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) Directorate – Psychosocial Advisors

Closing date: 20 August 2020

HST Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) Directorate – Sub-district Monitoring and Evaluation Officers

Closing date: 20 August 2020

HST Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) Directorate – Area Monitoring and Evaluation Officers

Closing date: 21 August 2020

HST Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) Directorate – Area Co-ordinators

Closing date: 21 August 2020

Health Systems Training Institute (PTY) LTD – Facility Team Leads

Closing date: 25 August 2020

Health Systems Training Institute (PTY) LTD – HIV Co-ordinator

Closing date: 25 August 2020

Health Systems Training Institute (PTY) LTD – Lay Counsellors

Closing date: 25 August 2020

Health Systems Training Institute (PTY) LTD – Linkage Officers

Closing date: 25 August 2020

Health Systems Training Institute (PTY) LTD – Technical Advisor: Monitoring and Evaluation

Closing date: 25 August 2020

Health Systems Training Institute (PTY) LTD – Paediatric Case Managers

Closing date: 25 August 2020

Health Systems Training Institute (PTY) LTD – Professional Nurse Clinicians

Closing date: 25 August 2020

Health Systems Training Institute (PTY) LTD – Campaign Agents

Closing date: 25 August 2020

Health Systems Training Institute (PTY) LTD – Data Capturers/Filing Clerks

Closing date: 25 August 2020

Health Systems Training Institute (PTY) LTD – Data Quality Monitoring Officer

Closing date: 25 August 2020

Health Systems Training Institute (PTY) LTD – District Training Co-ordinator

Closing date: 25 August 2020

Health Systems Training Institute (PTY) LTD – Driver Mobilisers

Closing date: 25 August 2020

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