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ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

What did we learn from South Africa's first-ever tuberculosis prevalence survey?

South African Medical Journal | 6 April 2021

Y Pillay, L Mvusi, LD Mameetja, S Dlamini

The World Health Organization (WHO) has urged countries to conduct tuberculosis (TB) prevalence surveys to better understand the burden of TB and to enable the WHO to conduct global estimates. Until the report from the first-ever prevalence survey in South Africa (SA), the country had to rely on WHO estimates. The recently published report on the SA TB prevalence survey provides important estimates of the burden of TB disease as well as information on health-seeking behaviour. This review notes the key findings of the 2018 prevalence survey. The high prevalence of TB in SA continues to be a major cause for concern, and calls for a significantly improved response to reach the End TB targets set by the WHO.

Symptoms and Functional Impairment Assessed 8 Months After Mild COVID-19 Among Health Care Workers

JAMA Network | 7 April 2021

Sebastian Havervall, Axel Rosell, Mia Phillipson, Sara Mangsbo, Peter Nilsson et al

Approximately 80% of hospitalized patients with COVID-19 report persistent symptoms several months after infection onset. However, knowledge of long-term outcomes among individuals with mild COVID-19 is scarce, and prevalence data are hampered by selection bias and suboptimal control groups. This cohort study investigated COVID-19-related long-term symptoms in health care professionals.

Global estimates of expected and preventable cervical cancers among girls born between 2005 and 2014: a birth cohort analysis

The Lancet | 14 April 2021

WHO has launched an initiative aiming to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem. Elimination is a long-term target that needs long-lasting commitment. To support local authorities in implementing human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination, we provide regional and country-specific estimates of cervical cancer burden and the projected impact of HPV vaccination among today's young girls who could develop cervical cancer if not vaccinated.

Problems in implementing interprofessional education in rural areas: an exploratory study

Rural and Remote Health | 14 April 2021

Kotaro Matoba, Hideki Hyodoh, Manabu Murakami

The study showed that health professionals in rural areas support interprofessional collaboration and interprofessional education (IPE), which may contribute to retaining health professionals in rural clinical settings. Doctors in rural areas actively cooperate to promote community-based medical education, despite heavy educational burdens. The present research showed similar trends among other health professionals in rural areas. This study agrees with previous research⁵ promoting IPE in rural areas, as it provides future health professionals many learning opportunities and contributes to their personal development. This article presents international data that contribute to global perspectives on IPE.

Asymptomatic Covid-19 – implications for the control of transmission in South Africa

The Union | 14 April 2021

M Paleker, A Tembo, M.A. Davies, H Mahomed, D Pienaar, et al

Asymptomatic COVID-19 may contribute significantly to the pandemic trajectory based on global biological, epidemiological and modelling evidence. A retrospective analysis was done to determine the proportion of asymptomatic COVID-19 in the workplace during the lockdown period from 27 March to 31 May 2020. We found that nearly 45% of cases were asymptomatic at the time of the first test. This high proportion of asymptomatic COVID-19 cases has implications for interventions, such as enforcing quarantine of all close contacts of COVID-19 cases regardless of symptoms.

Human immunodeficiency virus and mortality from coronavirus disease 2019: A systematic review and meta-analysis

Southern African Journal of HIV Medicine | 15 April 2021

Timotius Hariyanto, Jane Rosalind, Kevin Christian, Andree Kurniawan

Persons living with human immunodeficiency virus (PLWH) constitute a vulnerable population in view of their impaired immune status. At this time, the full interaction between HIV and severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) has been incompletely described. The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of HIV and SARS-CoV-2 co-infection on mortality. We systematically searched PubMed and the Europe PMC databases up to 19 January 2021, using specific keywords related to our aims. All published articles on coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and HIV were retrieved. The quality of the studies was evaluated using the Newcastle–Ottawa Scale for observational studies. Statistical analysis was performed with Review Manager version 5.4 and Comprehensive Meta-Analysis version 3 software.

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RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

HIV and cervical cancer: Behind South Africa's dramatically high numbers

Maverick Citizen | 12 April 2021

A recent study published in *The Lancet* found that women living with HIV made up an astonishing 63.4% of new cervical cancer cases in South Africa in 2018. Spotlight spoke to local experts about the links between HIV and cervical cancer in South Africa, and how cervical cancer is prevented, tested for and treated in the public sector.

'What if I infect my baby with the COVID-19 when I feed him?'- mothers share their fears

Health-E News | 13 April 2021

Although the immune systems of children and infants are resilient against contracting the coronavirus, moms who are exposed to the virus on a daily basis fear transmitting it to their new-born babies through breastfeeding. By Lilita Gcwabe and Nompilo Gwala. Doctors and experts agree that breast milk is the best source of nutrition for most infants. It also builds the baby's immune system, protecting them against illness. However, the coronavirus has brought new fears for mothers and their new-borns. Basetsana

Moshoeshoe, a 23-year old mother from Roodepoort in Gauteng, gave birth to her answered prayer, Cebolenkosi, on 15 of March 2021. Even as she gave the baby a name that means “God’s idea,” a pregnancy during the pandemic tested her. “I had just been fired from my job because the company I was working for closed down due to the coronavirus. I was also scared because I knew that my pregnancy meant I was at high risk of contracting the virus and other diseases because my immune system was weaker. I couldn’t go out to restaurants or even have a maternity photoshoot. I stayed indoors and couldn’t be as excited as I should have been,” she said. Moshoeshoe said that while she continues to breastfeed, she is practicing all the safety regulations to protect her and Cebolenkosi from the virus.

US decision to pause J&J jabs is another blow to global Covid fight

The Guardian | 13 April 2021

The call in the US for a pause in the use of the single-shot Johnson & Johnson Covid vaccine is another blow to hopes of vaccinating the whole world as fast as possible. Health agencies recommended that US states pause use of the jab while investigations take place into six cases of women who have experienced rare blood clotting events combined with low platelets in the days following vaccination. J&J announced it would also “proactively delay the rollout of our vaccine in Europe”, where the European Medicines Agency was already reviewing the US reports.

Covid vaccine side-effects: what are they, who gets them and why?

The Guardian | 13 April 2021

What are the most common side-effects from the Covid vaccines? According to Public Health England, most side-effects from two Covid vaccines – Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca – are mild and short-lived. These include soreness where the jab was given, feeling tired or achy and headaches. Uncommon side-effects include having swollen lymph nodes. Early reports that some people had severe allergic reactions, particularly to the Pfizer jab, led the UK’s Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to offer new recommendations, including that anyone receiving the Pfizer jab be monitored for 15 minutes after the event. Are blood clots a side-effect of the vaccines? Concerns have been raised about a particular situation whereby certain blood clots have occurred together with low levels of platelets – tiny cells in the blood that help it to clot. Earlier this month the MHRA said that while not yet proved, there was growing evidence to suggest this syndrome could be caused by the AstraZeneca jab, while the European Medicines Agency said there was a possible link and noted the syndrome should be listed as a very rare side-effect of the vaccine.

What’s next for the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?

Maverick Citizen | 14 April 2021

Over the next few days, the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority, the South African Medical Research Council and the Department of Health will decide how to proceed with South Africa’s vaccination roll-out after use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine was suspended, pending an investigation into six cases of blood clots reported in the United States. The next few days will be crucial in determining how South Africa continues with its Covid-19 vaccination roll-out.

For TB treatment to be effective, consider the male perspective, says foundation

Health-E News | 14 April 2021

In South Africa, Tuberculosis (TB) affects more men than women. The Desmond Tutu Health Foundation has called for the consideration of men’s voices when designing treatment and prevention programmes. The current ‘one-size-fits all approach’ is not working to adequately fight the TB epidemic, the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation said. Instead, interventions need to do more to include the voices of men, and challenge masculine tropes that create barriers to holistic treatment. Speaking during a webinar organised by the International Aids Society (IAS) on Tuesday, Andrew Medina-Marino of the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation said men need to be empowered to challenge unhealthy masculinity norms that impact their health.

After setbacks, rollout of new TB prevention pills to start in six districts

Spotlight | 14 April 2021

After various delays and setbacks, new, less toxic, short-course tuberculosis (TB) prevention therapy is finally being launched in six districts in South Africa – with training of healthcare workers already underway. The new three-month treatment course, called 3HP, will initially only be provided to eligible

people at risk of TB in the Oliver Tambo District in the Eastern Cape, Johannesburg, and Ekurhuleni in Gauteng, eThekweni in KwaZulu-Natal, Ehlanzeni in Mpumalanga and Cape Town in the Western Cape. The phased rollout will be scaled up to include a total of 23 districts before the end of 2022.

Bird flu outbreak confirmed in SA, Joburg farm quarantined

Times Live | 14 April 2021

The poultry industry was on high alert on Tuesday after an outbreak of avian influenza was confirmed in a commercial layer flock on the East Rand of Johannesburg. The South African Poultry Association (Sapa) said the farm was quarantined and that the N-type would be established on Wednesday after conclusive testing at Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute.

Hope in the Eastern Cape: A doctor reflects on the turnaround at Madwaleni Hospital

Spotlight | 15 April 2021

Speaking from Madwaleni District Hospital, Dr Andrew Miller's voice falters. Despite the rural hospital staff's best efforts, they simply did not have enough oxygen to save most COVID patients during the pandemic's second wave. More often, healthcare workers were forced to turn to palliative care, cushioning death for the very ill. Nurses buckled under emotions, as, in this tight-knit community, patients were often family or friends.

The 180-bed hospital housed in a 1960 missionary building on a hilltop overlooking the Eastern Cape's Xhora river, is two hours by rutted road from Mthatha. It services about 200 000 people, of whom only an estimated 70 000 are able to reach the facility.

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TRAINING AND RESOURCES

Health Systems Training Institute

The Health Systems Training Institute (HSTi) offers innovative, tailored and application-driven clinical and non-clinical training solutions aimed at strengthening health systems at all levels and improving the quality of primary health care. Courses on offer include accredited short programmes, non-accredited short programmes and full NQF programmes.

New Guidelines on Hypertensive Disorders in Pregnancy

Hypertensive disorders in pregnancy, such as pre-eclampsia, contribute significantly to maternal and foetal deaths in South Africa. This course is for family physicians, medical officers, general practitioners, midwives, and nurse practitioners working in primary care and district hospital levels to get up to date with the new national clinical guidelines.

8 CPD Points and effort of 8 Hours with access for 6 months

Improving the Health of Women, Children and Adolescents: from Evidence to Action

Each year, there are roughly 10 million new-born, child, adolescent, maternal, and stillborn deaths. Most of these deaths and linked disabilities can be prevented if evidence-based interventions are implemented. By signing up for this course, you'll learn from the world's leading experts with direct experience improving the health of women, children and adolescents across the globe. They'll take you on a unique and compelling learning journey, summarising the latest data, evidence, and research gaps in an accessible way.

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PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

Ground-breaking tuberculosis psychosocial support guide from the union, TB alert and global partners

The Union | 14 April 2021

The Union in partnership with TB Alert, WHO Regional Office for Europe and the Stop TB partnership

today released a new guide “Psychosocial counselling and treatment adherence support for people affected by tuberculosis (TB)”. This new Union guide on psychosocial support addresses critical gaps in TB care and control by focusing on overcoming the psychological, social and economic factors that prevent people from accessing diagnosis, adhering to care plans and successfully completing treatment.

Report on Weekly Deaths in South Africa

In the context of the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, it has become essential to track the weekly number of deaths that occur. Deaths recorded on the National Population Register are provided to the SAMRC on a weekly basis. These have been scaled up to estimate the actual number of deaths by accounting for the people who are not on the population register and the under-registration of deaths. The methodology for the adjustment and predicted values have been changed to enable monitoring in 2021 and the reporting week has been changed to an ‘epi-week’ that runs from Sunday to Saturday. The estimated numbers are compared with the number that would be expected based on the historical data from 2014-2019 (see Methodological Note for more details). The number of deaths of persons 1-year and older are reported because birth registration was put on hold during lockdown stage 5 affecting the number of infant deaths recorded on this system. The start date of each week is represented on the graph.

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CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Webinar: Infection prevention and control and public health and social measures in light of the variants of concern

As part of the infection prevention and control (IPC) Webinar Series of 2021, WHO invites you to the global webinar on IPC and the public health and social measures in light of the variants of concern. Speakers from WHO HQ, Europe regional office and South Africa will present on the global state of the variants of concern identified, as well as which countries have updated their public health and social measures in light of the variants.

Reaching zero: virtual forum on malaria elimination

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges, a growing number of countries are approaching – and achieving – malaria elimination. On 21 April 2021, ahead of World Malaria Day, country leaders, frontline health workers and global partners will come together in a virtual forum to share experiences and reflections on efforts to reach the target of zero malaria. The event will be co-hosted by WHO and the RBM Partnership to End Malaria from 12:00 to 13:30 GMT. Discussions will be in English, with simultaneous interpretation provided in French and Spanish.

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

FEMALES RISING THROUGH EDUCATION, SUPPORT AND HEALTH (FRESH): Research Nurse

Closing Date: 20 April 2021

HUMAN SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL – HUMAN AND SOCIAL CAPABILITIES: Various

Closing Date: 26 April 2021

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