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ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

Domestic violence and its relationship with quality of life in pregnant women during the outbreak of COVID-19 disease

BMC Pregnancy Childbirth | 28 January 2021

Somayyeh Naghizadeh, Mojgan Mirghafourvand, Roghaye Mohammadirad

During the COVID-19 pandemic, pregnant women bear considerable physical and psychological stress because of their special conditions, which combined with other stress factors such as violence, makes their situation even more critical. This study aimed to investigate the prevalence of domestic violence and its relationship with quality of life in pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Active case-finding in contacts of people with TB

The International Journal of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease | 1 February 2021

G Fox, J Johnston, T Nguyen, S Majumdar, J Denholm, H Asldurf, et al.

Exposure to people with TB substantially elevates a person's risk of tuberculous infection and TB disease. Systematic screening of TB contacts enables the early detection and treatment of co-prevalent disease, and the opportunity to prevent future TB disease. However, scale-up of contact investigation in high TB transmission settings remains limited. We undertook a narrative review to evaluate the evidence for contact investigation and identify strategies that TB programmes may consider when introducing contact investigation and management. Selection of contacts for priority screening depends upon their proximity and duration of exposure, along with their susceptibility to develop TB. Screening algorithms can be tailored to the target population, the availability of diagnostic tests and preventive therapy, and healthcare worker expertise. Contact investigation may be performed in the household or at communal locations. Local contact investigation policies should support vulnerable patients, and ensure that drop-out during screening can be mitigated. Ethical issues should be anticipated and addressed in each setting. Contact investigation is an important strategy for TB elimination. While its epidemiological impact will be greatest in lower-transmission settings, the early detection and prevention of TB have important benefits for contacts and their communities.

(Full article behind a pay wall)

Women's economic status, male authority patterns and intimate partner violence: a

qualitative study in rural North West Province, South Africa

Taylor & Francis Online | 4 February 2021

Meghna Ranganathan, Erin Stern, Louise Knight, Lufuno Muvhango, Mpho Molebatsi, et al.

There are conflicting views on the impact of microfinance-only interventions on women's economic empowerment and intimate partner violence in low and middle-income countries. Evidence suggests however that when microfinance is combined with complementary programmes (microfinance plus) it may be effective for empowering women and addressing intimate partner violence. We conducted in-depth interviews with adult women in rural South Africa who had received microfinance loans for more than a year and had recently completed gender training. We explored women's perceptions on income generation; the effects on their relationships, including intimate partner violence; their notions of power; and perspectives on men's reactions to their empowerment. Findings reveal that the notion of 'power within the self' is supported by women's income generation, alongside a sense of financial independence and improved social support. Women reported increased happiness and reduced financial stress, although social norms and gender expectations about women subservience and male headship remain salient, particularly among older women. Furthermore, younger women appeared to tolerate abuse due to financial and caring responsibilities. These findings underpin the importance of complementary gender training programmes and of including men as participants for enhancing the effectiveness of economic strengthening interventions.

When people do not 'Zol': Reduced emergency centre attendance of patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease during coronavirus disease 2019 lockdown with the accompanying tobacco sales ban in South Africa

African Journal of Primary Health Care & Family Medicine (PHCFM) | 15 February 2021

Piero Saieva, Louis Jenkins

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has spread throughout the world, with devastating effects of the virus as well as the repercussions of the resulting 'lockdowns'. South Africa went into a national lockdown in March 2020 to mitigate the impact of the virus. This included a ban on the sales of tobacco and electronic cigarette products. The ban has been a highly contentious issue in South Africa, discussed worldwide, which has drawn many criticisms. The prevalence rate of smoking in South Africa was around 21.5%, with the Western Cape province having a prevalence rate of 39%. We compared the number of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) presentations at a large regional referral hospital in the Western Cape province from January to August 2019 with the same period in 2020. Electronic emergency centre data showed a reduction of 69.28% in COPD presentations. To control for some confounders for the same period, we also reviewed patients presenting with urinary tract infections, which showed only a 30.60% reduction. This notable reduction in COPD presentations reduced service pressure of emergency centre and most likely benefitted patients' health. Further research and policies are needed to ensure ongoing reduction in the prevalence of smoking.

Collective sensemaking for action: researchers and decision makers working collaboratively to strengthen health systems

The BMJ | 16 February 2021

Lucy Gilson, Edwine Barasa, Leanne Brady, Nancy Kagwaja, Nonhlanhla Nxumalo et al.

Lucy Gilson and colleagues draw on experiences from Kenya and South Africa to consider the practice, benefits, and challenges of research co-production for strengthening health systems. Health policy and systems research has gained traction in low and middle income countries over the past few decades. It seeks to understand and improve "how societies organise themselves in achieving collective health goals, and how different actors interact in the policy and implementation processes to contribute to policy outcomes." "Getting health research into policy and practice," also promoted by global funding agencies, is a central concern. However, the mechanisms proposed for doing so can assume a linear pathway from research to policy change, overlooking the power and politics entailed in knowledge generation and use. Limited attention may also be given to the important role that knowledge gained through experience can have in health system decision making, as distinct from research evidence.

A qualitative analysis of seven ivermectin formulations in South Africa

South African Medical Journal | 18 February 2020

Q Borhat, A Borhat

Some South African (SA) healthcare practitioners are promoting the prescription and use of products

claiming to contain ivermectin for the treatment and/or prevention of COVID-19 in SA. This study qualitatively analysed seven samples of ivermectin formulations (5 tablet and 2 capsule formulations) being sold in SA for human use. The samples were analysed using a high-performance liquid chromatography instrument connected to a Sciex X500R quadrupole time-of-flight high-resolution mass spectrometer. The study found that all the samples had both the major homologues of ivermectin (B1a and B1b) and also that 4 out of the 5 tablet formulations tested had at least one additional undeclared active pharmaceutical ingredient.

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RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

Comparing the Covid-19 vaccines developed by Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson

STAT News | 2 February 2021

In an ideal world, a pandemic vaccine could be delivered in a single shot, so supplies could be stretched to cover a lot of people. It would trigger no side effect more significant than a sore arm. And it would be easy to ship and store. Soon, it seems, this ideal of a Covid-19 vaccine will be within reach. Last Friday, Johnson & Johnson announced that a one-dose vaccine being developed by its vaccines division, Janssen Pharmaceuticals, had been shown to be 66% protective against moderate to severe Covid infection in a multicountry study. But, importantly, it was 85% effective in protecting against severe disease. And there were no hospitalizations or deaths among people in the vaccine arm of a large clinical trial.

Different types of COVID-19 vaccines: How they work

Mayo Clinic | 10 February 2021

Curious about how mRNA vaccines and other types of COVID-19 vaccines can help you develop immunity to the COVID-19 virus? Understand how different technologies work with the immune system to provide protection.

Variants and vaccines in South Africa, and comparing the 1918 flu pandemic: A Podcast

The Lancet Voice | 11 February 2021

Salim Abdool Karim, head of South Africa's COVID-19 advisory committee, joins us to discuss variants, vaccination, and the national response, and Laura Spinney, author of *Pale Rider*, chats about the parallels between the 1918 flu pandemic and our current predicament.

More than 3 000 Gauteng students didn't return to school on Monday

The South African | 15 February 2021

As schools reopened across South Africa on Monday 15 February 2021, Gauteng Education MEC Panyaza Lesufi expressed concern over some students not returning to class. Speaking at the official opening of the Abram Hlophe Primary School in Katlehong on Monday, Lesufi explained some 3 000 learners dropped out during 2020. He added that officials were dispatched to investigate. The MEC noted that COVID-19 had impacted the education sector, but said he wouldn't allow a pandemic to be used as an excuse for dropping out of school.

Gasping for breath: COVID-19 has exposed the world's medical oxygen crisis

Fortune | 15 February 2021

After years of campaigning, the pharmaceutical industry is inching forward in providing access to life-saving medicines in low-income countries, though much remains to be done. But healthcare is not only about drugs and vaccines. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed a neglected access crisis in another vital area: medical oxygen. Across much of Africa, as well as parts of Asia and Latin America, a lack of medical oxygen is leaving doctors unable to treat patients.

Three major breakthroughs in HIV prevention

africanews | 16 February 2021

Since late 2018, researchers have been burning the midnight oil to get to the core of the current pandemic, Covid-19. Several vaccines have been developed while some are still being worked on from various parts of the globe. Despite all these noble initiatives to save humanity, some scientists made milestones in coming up with major breakthroughs on HIV and Aids. Scientists in the past three months have made three major breakthroughs in saving humanity from HIV and Aids that have affected over 38 million people in the world.

All you need to know about SA's J&J vaccine roll-out

Bhekisa Centre for Health Journalism | 16 February 2021

Eighty-thousand Johnson & Johnson jabs will touch down at OR Tambo International Airport on Tuesday and be distributed to 16 sites across the country where healthcare workers will be vaccinated. This marks the start of South Africa's new, adjusted vaccine roll-out plan where jabs will be given as part of an implementation study conducted by the South African Medical Research Council and the Department of Health. The study will focus on "real-life" environment roll-out issues and gather additional data on side-effects and the protection the shot offers against severe Covid-19 disease caused by the new SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes Covid-19) variant, 501Y.V2, that is now dominant in South Africa.

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TRAINING AND RESOURCES

Call for Research Proposals: Project Africa GRADIENT. Genomic Research Approach for Diversity and Optimising Therapeutics

SAMRC | 1 March 2021

Evaluate genetic diversity as the contributing factor to variability in exposure and/or safety and efficacy to drugs used to treat tuberculosis and malaria in Africa.

Project Africa GRADIENT (Genomic Research Approach for Diversity and Optimising Therapeutics) was initiated in 2018 as a collaboration between GSK and Novartis. The primary aim was to establish a consortium to collaborate with expert academic centers and organisations in Africa to support high quality research on African genetic diversity of relevance to drug therapeutics.

Understanding IPC in the era of Covid-19

PEPFAR | 8 – 12 March 2021

Due to the effects of COVID-19 and in preparation for the 3rd wave, the CSIR team has developed a course on both COVID-19 and TB Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) management in healthcare settings. This webinar course consists of 5 modules (Monday - Friday, 10:00 - 12:00) and is a collaboration between the Infection Control Africa Network (ICAN) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). The modules are structured as webinar training sessions and offer an educational model for healthcare practitioners, administrators and facility staff to gain critical skills in IPC for COVID-19, TB and risk management in IPC. Please contact admin@studio-78.co.za if you and your team wish to apply for data support to attend these webinars.

EVDS Self-Registration App FAQ

Who must register on the Electronic Vaccination Data System (EVDS), how should you register, and why?

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PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

The Bulletin of the World Health Organization

World Health Organization | February 2021

The Bulletin of the World Health Organization is an open-access journal of public health, with a special focus on low and middle-income countries. It was first published in 1948 and, since then, has sought to make its full contents as widely available as possible. The Bulletin is a fully open-access journal with no article-processing charges. All peer-reviewed articles and the journal archives are indexed, including in

the Web of Science and MEDLINE, and freely available online. The Bulletin is a fully open-access journal with no article-processing charges. All articles are available under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY 3.0 IGO) and are freely available online: <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/en/>.

Congenital Syphilis Quarterly Surveillance Report December 2020

In order to monitor progress towards the elimination of congenital syphilis (CS), South Africa has included CS on its revitalised national Notifiable Medical Conditions (NMC) surveillance platform since July 2017. CS is a category 2 NMC- which means all health care workers are required to notify cases through paper-based or electronic case notification forms (CNF) within 7 days of diagnosis. In addition, data on clinical notifications collected through CNFs on the NMC platform, data on RPR positive results among infants and children < 2 years are collected in order to monitor maternal syphilis exposure and or testing practices. Since 1 January 2020, CS surveillance data are supplemented by collection of additional clinical information on notified cases through a CS specific case investigation form (CIF). This report presents data on clinical notifications and RPR positive results among infants < 24 months for the period 1 July 2017 – 31 December 2020. The report also presents data on gaps in congenital syphilis prevention and management using data from the newly introduced CIF

WHO Guidelines for malaria

World Health Organization | 16 February 2021

The WHO Guidelines for malaria bring together the Organization's most up-to-date recommendations for malaria in one user-friendly and easy-to-navigate online platform. The first version of the Guidelines is a compilation of existing WHO recommendations on malaria and supersedes 2 previous WHO publications: the Guidelines for the treatment of malaria, third edition and the Guidelines for malaria vector control. Recommendations on malaria will continue to be reviewed and, where appropriate, updated based on the latest available evidence. Any updated recommendations will always display the date of the most recent revision in the MAGICapp platform. With each update, a new PDF version of the consolidated guidelines will also be available for download on the WHO website.

Digital Adaptation Kit for Antenatal Care: Operational requirements for implementing WHO recommendations in digital systems

World Health Organization | 17 February 2021

Digital Adaptation Kits (DAKs) include data and health content consistent with WHO's ANC recommendations, generically applicable to digital systems. They are software-neutral, operational, and structured documentation based on WHO clinical, health system and data use recommendations to systematically and transparently inform the design of digital systems. Components include: (1) linked health interventions and recommendations; (2) personas; (3) user scenarios; (4) business processes and workflows; (5) core data elements mapped to standard terminology codes (e.g. ICD); (6) decision support; (7) programme indicators; and (8) functional and non-functional requirements. Evidence-based recommendations, such as those featured in WHO guidelines, establish standards of care and offer a reference point for informing the content of digital systems that countries adopt. However, guidelines are often only available in a narrative format that requires a resource-intensive process to be elaborated into the specifications needed for digital systems. This translation of guidelines for digital systems often results in subjective interpretation for implementers and software vendors, which can lead to inconsistencies or inability to verify the content within these systems, potentially leading to adverse health outcomes and other unintended effects. Additionally, where digital systems exist, the documentation of the underlying data and content may be unavailable or proprietary, requiring governments to start from scratch and expend additional resources each time they intend to deploy such a system. Furthermore, this lack of documentation of the health content can lead to dependence on one vendor and haphazard deployments that are unscalable or difficult to replicate across different settings.

South African Child Gauge 2020

Children's Institute (CI), University of Cape Town | 18 February 2020

This 15th annual review of the situation of the country's children is published by the Children's Institute (CI), University of Cape Town, in partnership with UNICEF South Africa; the DSI-NRF Centre for Excellence in Human Development, University of the Witwatersrand; the Standard Bank Tutuwa Community Foundation; and the DG Murray Trust. The theme of the 2020 issue – "Food and nutrition security" – draws attention to the slow violence of child malnutrition and identifies critical points for

intervention across the life course, motivating for urgent, early and sustained investment in order to reduce the burden of stunting, obesity and non-communicable diseases; improve children's health, education and employment prospects; and drive national development.

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CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Global Diabetes Compact

WHO | 14 April 2021

On World Diabetes Day, WHO announced the development of the Global Diabetes Compact, a comprehensive and inclusive approach to support countries in implementing effective programmes for the prevention and management of diabetes.

The goals of the Compact, the development of which will be led by WHO, are:

- increased capacity of health systems to detect, diagnose and manage diabetes;
- integration of diabetes care into existing programmes, thereby leveraging existing capacities in the health-care system and meeting people's health-care needs in a more holistic way; and
- the scaling-up of health promotion efforts to prevent diabetes, particularly among young people.

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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

Closing Date: 22 February 2020

HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING (HSS) UNIT: District Data Management Officer

Closing Date: 28 February 2020

HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING UNIT: District Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer

Closing Date: 28 February 2020

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE (SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH) CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: SARChI Postdoctoral Fellowships 2021 (3 posts)

The School of Public Health, University of the Western Cape (SOPH), has three positions open for Postdoctoral Fellowships beginning as soon as possible in 2021. The Postdoctoral Fellows will be required to register at the University of the Western Cape, and will contribute to the research areas of the NRF/DSI SARChI Chairs which have complementary research programmes, and which seek to consolidate a world-class hub in the global south in the field of health policy and systems research.

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