



CATEGORIES

[Academic and Peer Reviewed Articles](#)

[Recent News](#)

[Training and Resources](#)

[Publications and Reports](#)

[Conferences and Events](#)

[Job Opportunities](#)

ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

Bridging the health inequality gap: An examination of South Africa's social innovation in health landscape

Springer Link | 1 March 2021

Katusha de Villiers

Despite the end of apartheid in the early 1990s, South Africa remains racially and economically segregated. The country is beset by persistent social inequality, poverty, unemployment, a heavy burden of disease and the inequitable quality of healthcare service provision. The South African health system is currently engaged in the complex project of establishing universal health coverage that ensures the system's ability to deliver comprehensive care that is accessible, affordable and acceptable to patients and families, while acknowledging the significant pressures to which the system is subject. Within this framework, the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship works to pursue social impact towards social justice in Africa with a systems lens on social innovation within innovative finance, health, education and youth development. The aim of this study is to demonstrate the capacity for social innovation in health with respect for South Africa, and to highlight some current innovations that respond to issues of health equity such as accessibility, affordability, and acceptability.

Metabolomics of sebum reveals lipid dysregulation in Parkinson's disease

Nature Communications | 11 March 2021

Eleanor Sinclair, Drupad Trivedi, Depanjan Sarkar, Caitlin Walton-Doyle, Joy Milne et al.

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder, which is characterised by degeneration of distinct neuronal populations, including dopaminergic neurons of the substantia nigra. Here, we use a metabolomics profiling approach to identify changes to lipids in PD observed in sebum, a non-invasively available biofluid. We used liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry (LC-MS) to analyse 274 samples from participants (80 drug naïve PD, 138 medicated PD and 56 well matched control subjects) and detected metabolites that could predict PD phenotype. Pathway enrichment analysis shows alterations in lipid metabolism related to the carnitine shuttle, sphingolipid metabolism, arachidonic acid metabolism and fatty acid biosynthesis. This study shows sebum can be used to identify potential biomarkers for PD.

Triple jeopardy: disabled people and the COVID-19 pandemic

The Lancet | 16 March 2021

Tom Shakespeare, Florence Ndagire and Queen Seketi

People with disabilities have been differentially affected by COVID-19 because of three factors: the increased risk of poor outcomes from the disease itself, reduced access to routine health care and rehabilitation, and the adverse social impacts of efforts to mitigate the pandemic. 10 years ago, WHO's World Report on Disability noted that people with disabilities were more likely to be older, poorer, experience comorbidities, and be female. Older age, deprivation, and comorbidities are also associated with increased risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19. Risk of death from COVID-19 between Jan 24 and Nov 30, 2020, in England was 3/1 times greater for men with disabilities and 3/5 times greater for women with disabilities than for men and women without disabilities. People with intellectual disabilities living in congregate residential settings, relevant mainly to high-income settings, had a higher risk of death from COVID-19 than people without disabilities. But even in household settings, people with intellectual disability have an increased risk of COVID-19 death.

A scoping review of evaluated Indigenous community-based mental wellness initiatives

Rural and Remote Health | 17 March 2021

Jeyasakthi Venugopal, Melody Ninomiya, Nadia Greenor, Laura Peach, Renee Linklater, et al

Many Indigenous peoples around the world are disproportionately affected by mental health challenges, due to intergenerational and collective trauma stemming from historical losses and ongoing colonialism. A growing body of literature suggests that mental wellness initiatives are more culturally safe and result in more successful and sustainable outcomes when they are developed by, for and with Indigenous communities using community-driven approaches that prioritize and privilege Indigenous leadership, knowledge systems, beliefs and practices. However, knowledge has not been synthesized on mental wellness initiatives and the extent of community engagement during the development, implementation, and evaluation stages of these initiatives.

[\(Return to Top\)](#)

RECENT NEWS

World TB Day 2021

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | March 2021

Each year, we recognize World TB Day on March 24. This annual event commemorates the date in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacillus that causes tuberculosis (TB). World TB Day is a day to educate the public about the impact of TB around the world. CDC, along with our partners and colleagues around the world share successes in TB prevention and control and raise awareness of the challenges that hinder our progress toward the elimination of this devastating disease.

'WHO As Fragile As It Is Indispensable' – Report Probes Geneva Global Health Hub's Response To COVID Crisis

Health Policy Watch | 12 March 2021

One year after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic on 11 March 2020, a new report by the Foundation for Geneva has traced the success and the failures of the WHO and other international Geneva organisations in their response – as well as the implications for the future of multilateralism. "This deep-dive into 2020, seen from international Geneva, reveals in a crude way the underlying planetary crises: multilateralism at half-mast, states turning in on themselves, the race for drugs and vaccines, and vaccines disrupted by private financial issues and national sovereignty, increasingly noisy alternative truths, etc. But what COVID reveals is also the capacity of the international community to unite to defeat the same common enemy, with a cockpit located mainly in Geneva," states the report, released this week.

Access to COVID-19 vaccines: looking beyond COVAX

The Lancet | 13 March 2021

Global health leaders have been in a congratulatory mood. On March 1, they celebrated the first vaccinations against COVID-19 in Africa delivered through COVAX—the scheme led by GAVI, CEPI, and WHO to support research and development, raise funding, and negotiate the bulk purchase and equitable global distribution of vaccines for COVID-19. As of March 9, 12 million doses have been shipped to 29 countries, marking the beginning of the largest vaccine roll-out in history. This is an unprecedented achievement. Yet COVAX is wholly unequipped to resolve many of the most pressing threats to its mission. Global vaccination is central to ending the pandemic, yet it has been dealt with at far too low a political level. Too many obstacles are going unchallenged. A high-level individual or group with political acumen, technical competency, and the ability to advocate for justice is needed to galvanise the effort.

What is a COVID-19 variant strain?

Mayo Clinic | 13 March 2021

Variant basically means a mutation that occurs in the virus over time. So just with natural evolution over time, as the virus infects people, it has the opportunity to replicate its genome, and every time it replicates its genome, there are chances for errors or mutations to occur. We've now been a year with this virus and as it's infected millions of people, it's replicated its genome billions of times and errors have been incorporated. These have resulted in mutations or variants. We fully expected that variants/mutations would occur with this virus.

Baby drought of Covid-19 crisis risks population crunch

Fin24 | 14 March 2021

More than a year since the global pandemic struck, its damage to the population growth is starting to become starkly clear, and not just because of the grim death toll. Major economies from Italy to Singapore, already afflicted by dire demographics, are seeing that phenomenon accelerate after measures limiting social contacts and the worst growth crisis in generations combined to prevent or dissuade people from having babies. While workplace closures and forced isolation might have encouraged couples to spend time together productively, the number of newborns has been dwarfed by plunging fertility emerging in national data for 2020.

Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine and blood clots: Should we be worried?

Science Focus | 16 March 2021

A number of countries in Europe and across the world have suspended use of the Oxford/AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine. It comes amid reports of a small number of people developing blood clots after having the jab. Here we take a look at the key questions surrounding the situation.

What has happened? There have been a small number of reports of people experiencing blood clots in the days and weeks after receiving the Oxford vaccine. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) reported one person in Austria was diagnosed with blood clots and died 10 days after vaccination, but it stressed there is “currently no indication that vaccination has caused these conditions”. The World Health Organisation (WHO), the EMA and the UK’s Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) said there was no evidence of a link between the vaccine and an increased risk of blood clots.

Warnings that Covid infections in SA are slowly increasing

EWN | 17 March 2021

Coronavirus infections in South Africa are slowly starting to increase. This is according to actuary Louis Rossouw who analyses data on the pandemic’s trajectory compiled by the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD). In the past few days the Northern Cape, in particular, has seen a marked increase. In epidemiology, the basic reproduction number reflects the average number of people being infected by one person. Rossouw is the head of research & analytics at reinsurance company Gen Re South Africa and member of the COVID-19 actuaries response group; he looked at this data to track the movement of the pandemic in the country.

[\(Return to Top\)](#)

TRAINING AND RESOURCES

EVDS Self Registration Portal User Manual

Healthcare worker and not registered to receive the COVID-19 vaccine yet? View the step-to-step guide for how to register.

South Africa Global Fund Country Dialogue Survey

For the past 18 years, the Global Fund has worked with partners around the world to fight AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and strengthen systems for health. Since 2003, the Global Fund has invested more than \$1 billion (R15 billion) in South Africa. In partnership with the South African Government, this investment has helped provide life-saving treatment to 4.86 million people living with HIV, reach 2 million key and vulnerable populations with HIV prevention programs, treat 210,000 people with TB, and place 134,000 vulnerable people onto TB preventive therapy. In December 2019, the Global Fund allocated South Africa an additional \$546,766,626 (R8.1 billion) for HIV and TB programs to be implemented from April 2022 to March 2025. To access this funding, the South African Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) is developing a funding request to the Global Fund, due on 15 August 2021. It is important that the funding request be strategically focused and technically sound. It must be aligned to the National Strategic Plan on HIV, TB and STIs, and reflect the issues and priorities of South Africans in their diversity. This survey invites you to engage in shaping the broad funding priorities, which will inform more in-depth discussions at constituency consultations in February and March. The survey has 21 questions and should take about half an hour to complete. The CCM deeply appreciates and greatly values your contributions to this national initiative of ending HIV and TB. Let our actions count!

[\(Return to Top\)](#)

PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

Handbook on gender-responsive police services for women and girls subject to violence

Strengthening the justice sector response, particularly that of law enforcement, has consistently been cited as one of the most challenging issues when responding to violence against women and girls. A positive initial contact experience with police is crucial for survivors of violence and a high-quality police and justice response must be available and accessible to all women and girls who are navigating an often-complex justice system, especially those who are most marginalized and are at greater risk of experiencing violence. To respond to this need, UN Women, under the framework of the UN Joint Global Programme on Essential Services, and in partnership with UNODC and the IAWP, have developed a handbook on gender-responsive police services for women and girls subject to violence. The handbook is based on and complements existing global and country-specific handbooks and training materials for law enforcement. It covers in depth areas such as: gender-responsive police investigations; prevention; intersectionality; survivor-centred approaches; promoting positive masculinities; coordination; institution-building; and emerging issues such as online and ICT-facilitated violence against women and girls. The handbook also includes guidance on responding to violence against women and girls during crises, including pandemics. The target audience for the guidance is police middle managers; however, it can equally be used to engage senior management on institutional transformation and training for frontline responders, in police academies and 'refresher courses'.

[\(Return to Top\)](#)

CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

International Conference on Nursing and Midwifery Leadership

The International Research Conference is a federated organization dedicated to bringing together a significant number of diverse scholarly events for presentation within the conference program. Events will run over a span of time during the conference depending on the number and length of the presentations. With its high quality, it provides an exceptional value for students, academics and industry researchers.

Date: 15 – 16 April 2021

Venue: Cape Town (Digital)

The 17th Annual Congress of Midwives of South Africa – Midwives embracing change and transformation – a breakthrough in resilience, reinvention and innovation

Date: 24 to 25 August 2021

[\(Return to Top\)](#)

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH: Registrar Academic Level 8

Closing Date: 2 April 2021

[\(Return to Top\)](#)



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