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ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

Isoniazid preventive therapy plus antiretroviral therapy for the prevention of tuberculosis: a systematic review and meta-analysis of individual participant data

The Lancet | 1 January 2021

Jennifer Ross, Anani Badje, Molebogeng Rangaka, Sarah Walker, Adrienne Shapiro, Katherine Thomas, et al

Isoniazid preventive therapy prevents active tuberculosis in people with HIV, but previous studies have found no evidence of benefit in people with HIV who had a negative tuberculin skin test, and a non-significant effect on mortality. The study aimed to estimate the effect of isoniazid preventive therapy given with antiretroviral therapy (ART) for the prevention of tuberculosis and death among people with HIV across population subgroups.

Gambling: a neglected public health issue

The Lancet | 1 January 2021

Editorial

Gambling involves placing something of value at risk in the hopes of gaining something of greater value, and includes casino gambling, lotteries, and internet gambling. Gambling is not an ordinary activity: it is a health-harming addictive behaviour, recently recognised in the International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision (ICD-11) and Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th Edition (DSM-5). Gambling disorders often remain undiagnosed and untreated. According to WHO, the prevalence of gambling disorders among adults varies between 0.1% and 5.8%. Gambling is a source of potentially serious and wide-ranging harms, affecting an individual's health, wealth, and relationships. It affects whole families and communities, and can become a lifelong struggle to avoid relapse. There is an urgent need to assess and understand the barriers and facilitators to preventing gambling-related health harms. The rapid and geographically broad increase in use of internet and smartphones has completely altered the gambling landscape. Today, the possible adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on addictive behaviours and disorders are yet to be fully understood. The COVID-19 pandemic response, bringing lockdowns and unprecedented restrictions in people's lives, could act as a catalyst, intensifying gambling behaviours by increasing time spent at home and time spent online. Preliminary data from a survey of 6000 respondents in China suggest that coping behaviours during the COVID-19 crisis increased the risk

for substance use disorders and internet addiction. An awareness of this growing public health issue could provide an opportunity to ensure public support to tackle gambling-related harms and protect the most vulnerable. In this issue of *The Lancet Public Health*, Heather Wardle and Sally McManus report results from a survey in young adults aged 16-24 years showing an association between gambling behaviour and suicidality (suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts). "In view of these data, it is crucial to improve screening and support services for people with gambling problems, either within primary care or in addiction treatment settings".

Predicting factors of elderly patients' discharge to home after rehabilitation in rural Japan: a retrospective cohort study

Rural and Remote Health | 7 January 2021

Ryuichi Ohta, Natsumi Maeki, Sokichi Maniwa, Koichi Miyakoshi

The aging of society continues to progress in Japan. As aging is more pronounced in rural than in urban societies, rehabilitation can contribute to rural elderly patients' discharge to home after hospitalization for various causes. The relationship between rural elderly patients' improvement of motor and cognitive function in relation to activities of daily life (ADL) through rehabilitation and their discharge to home has not been clarified in rural communities. The purpose of this study was to clarify whether an improvement of ADL can enable elderly hospitalized patients to discharge to their homes in a rural community.

Evaluating the African food supply against the nutrient intake goals set for preventing diet-related non-communicable diseases: 1990 to 2017 trend analysis

PLOS ONE | 11 January 2020

Samson Gebremedhin

Population intake goals intended to prevent diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have been defined for multiple nutrients. Yet, little is known whether the existing food supply in Africa is in conformity with these goals or not. We evaluated the African food balances against the recommendations for macronutrients, free sugars, types of fatty acids, cholesterol and fruits and vegetables over 1990 to 2017, and provided regional, sub-regional and country-level estimates.

Improving the quality of blood pressure measurements in an outpatient diabetes clinic

BMJ Journals | 12 January 2021

Jennifer Iyengar, Matthew Johnson, Shafaq Khairi, Jessica Fennelly and Jennifer Wyckoff

Hypertension is an important modifiable risk factor for cardiovascular disease in patients with diabetes. Despite established guidelines, the percentage of patients meeting the target blood pressure (BP) of <140/90 mm Hg in clinic remains suboptimal. In this project, we sought to improve BP measurement in an outpatient diabetes clinic. Two interventions were performed: (1) Changes were made to the timing of BP measurement during patient intake and (2) An electronic medical record (EMR) alert reminded staff to repeat BP if the initial reading was above target. Baseline data were collected on 4764 patients, with 72.5% meeting their BP target. After implementation of changes to the timing of BP measurement during patient intake, 73.3% of patients met the target (no significant change). However, after implementation of the EMR alert, there was a statistically significant improvement in patients meeting the target BP at 76.8% ($p < 0.01$). This reduction was driven by the high percentage of patients with an initially elevated BP measurement that came down into goal range on repeat measurement. Those who remained above target despite multiple readings could be referred to a new pharmacist-led hypertension clinic to ensure adequate follow-up and medication adjustment. It is important to ensure that in clinic BP measurements are taken correctly and adhere to best practices. Use of a single in-clinic BP measurement may result in overtreatment of hypertension. While timing of BP measurement during patient intake was not important, repeating high BP measurements did improve the number of patients in an outpatient diabetes clinic meeting their BP target.

Keeping childhood immunisation rates stable during the COVID-19 pandemic

The Lancet | 15 January 2021

Anani Badje, Molebogeng Rangaka, A Sarah Walker, Adrienne Shapiro, Katherine Thomas, et al

Vaccination teams all over the world grew concerned about how to ensure stable childhood immunisation rates once local COVID-19 outbreaks turned into national outbreaks. Childhood immunisation team members in the Lothian area of Scotland were equally concerned. Lothian comprises Edinburgh and the surrounding area; it has a population of around 900 000 people and around 10 000 births per year. In previous years, attendance at the five routine vaccination appointments in children (aged 0–5 years) has

been very high, leading to coverage of more than 95% (as recommended by WHO) for most vaccines. The adaptations mentioned in the study ensured the safe and successful delivery of vaccinations to children in Lothian, Scotland, during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, as shown by stable clinic attendance rates in the region.

Non-Obstetric Safety of Epidurals (NOSE)

BMJ Journals | 15 January 2021

Fabian Alexander, Blyth Cook, Emma Millar, Flora McLennan, Marc Janssens and Catherine Stretton

Epidurals are a useful perioperative procedure for effective analgesia that allow early mobilisation after major surgery and help to minimise postoperative pulmonary, cardiovascular and thromboembolic complications. However, there are potential rare but life-changing complications such as an epidural haematoma. These require a high standard of post-epidural care for prompt recognition and prevention of permanent paralysis. Following a local critical incident of delayed diagnosis of an epidural haematoma in a patient after epidural catheter removal, a multidisciplinary team undertook a Quality Improvement (QI) project to improve epidural safety. To achieve this aim, it is essential that healthcare staff are aware of the early signs of neurological complications during and after epidurals and of what action to take in the event of a developing complication. The application of robust QI methodology has contributed to a sustained improvement in the healthcare staff competence (as measured using a pulse survey) at managing patients who have received perioperative epidurals. This increased from a baseline mean survey score of 38% on three surgical step down wards (general surgery, vascular and gynaecology) to 68% (averaged over the most recent 3 months of the project time frame). Educational interventions alone rarely lead to meaningful and lasting impact for all healthcare staff, due to high turnover of staff and shift working patterns. However, with multiple plan, do, study, act cycles, and a robust QI approach, there was also sustained improvement in process measures, including the occurrence of written handover from high dependency to the step down wards (baseline 33%–71%), ensuring the application of yellow epidural alert wristbands to make these patients readily identifiable (56%–86%), and early signs in improvement in reliability of motor block checks for 24 hours' post-catheter removal (47%–69%).

Challenges of a Supplemental Private Option Under National Health Insurance—Observations From Australia

JAMA Intern Med | 19 January 2021

Bruce E. Landon, Shaun Larkin and Adam G. Elshaug

As the US debates possible policy paths to achieve affordable and sustainable universal health insurance coverage, there has been support for maintaining private choice in the market. Although private insurance is currently central to the US health care system, its potential role, if any, under alternative approaches to coverage expansion, such as Medicare for All, is less clear. Many countries with universal coverage maintain private insurance for services that are not covered. However, Australia is one of the few countries with universal government-sponsored insurance that actively promotes the use of parallel private insurance to supplement public coverage for services that are covered. Currently, about 44% of Australians have some form of private hospital insurance. In this article, the authors discuss the role of private hospital insurance in Australia, some of the benefits and drawbacks, and how the Australian example might inform US policy.

Challenges of a Supplemental Private Option Under National Health Insurance—Observations From Australia | Health Care Reform | JAMA Internal Medicine | JAMA Network

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RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

Salim Abdool Karim: 'None of us are safe from Covid if one of us is not. We have mutual interdependence'

The Guardian | 10 January 2021

The face of South Africa's Covid science on why Africa has been hit less hard than Europe, the new variant in the region, and the danger of vaccine nationalism. The epidemiologist Salim Abdool Karim could be considered South Africa's Anthony Fauci. As co-chair of the South African Ministerial Advisory Committee on Covid-19, he is the government's top adviser on the pandemic and has become the

country's face of Covid-19 science. He also sits on the Africa Task Force for Novel Coronavirus, overseeing the continent's response to the global crisis. Karim, who directs the Durban-based Centre for the Aids Programme of Research in South Africa and is a professor at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, has long advocated for science and speaking truth to power. For three decades, along with his wife and scientific collaborator, Quarraisha Abdool Karim, he has been at the forefront of the fight against South Africa's substantial HIV and tuberculosis epidemics and in the early 2000s was one of the scientists who spoke out against the government's Aids denialism. Karim and Fauci, the US's leading infectious disease expert, were recently jointly awarded the 2020 John Maddox prize for "standing up for science during the coronavirus pandemic". The prize is given by the UK charity Sense About Science and the journal Nature. South Africa's president, Cyril Ramaphosa, recently announced new lockdown measures after the country hit 1m coronavirus cases – the first African nation to reach that total – and a new variant, 501.V2, arising there was found to be spreading rapidly. How worried are you? I am deeply concerned that this is now the dominant variant in South Africa and it is driving our second wave. We've gone from a situation where we had quite a stable virus to suddenly one with almost 20 mutations, three of which are in the most important part – the receptor binding domain which attaches to the human cell. And while we haven't found it is either more or less severe than the previous strain, it appears able to infect people more easily. We don't know how it came about – it is quite different from the UK variant, though they share one mutation [the N501Y mutation in the receptor binding domain] – and we need studies to tell us. But right now, our priority is bending the second wave...

Wits scientists artificially infect mosquitoes with human malaria to advance treatment

Wits University | 14 January 2021

Wits scientists and local and global partners have artificially infected mosquitoes with human malaria and identified a new chemical compound to treat malaria. Scientists at the Wits Research Institute for Malaria (WRIM) in partnership with the University of Pretoria and colleagues in the US, Spain and Switzerland have identified novel antiplasmodial lead compounds for mass drug administration and vector control to eliminate malaria. A vector refers to an organism that carries and transmits an infectious disease, as mosquitoes do malaria. Lead compounds are chemical compounds that show promise as treatment for a disease and may lead to the development of a new drug. Antiplasmodial lead compounds are those that counter parasites of the genus Plasmodium, which is the parasite that infects mosquitoes and causes malaria in people. The study findings were published in Nature Communications on 11 January 2021, at a time when malaria incidence generally peaks after the holiday season.

Will vaccines work against the new COVID variants? Scientists race to find out

Bhekisisa | 15 January 2021

As South Africa awaits the arrival of its first shipment of COVID vaccines there are growing concerns about a new coronavirus variant — known as 501Y.V2 — circulating in the country, and what the changes in the virus could mean for how well the jabs work. The new variant, which first emerged in the Eastern Cape in August, appears to spread much faster than the original form of the virus. President Cyril Ramaphosa said this week: "This explains the fact that many more people have become infected in a far shorter space of time." The number of daily infections during South Africa's current second COVID wave has surpassed those seen during the first wave — the highest number of daily infections during the first wave was 13 944 on 24 July last year compared to the latest highest number of recorded cases of 21 980 on 8 January. Although early research suggests that this new variant doesn't cause more severe illness than the original form of the virus, it does put more pressure on the health system because there are so many more cases which means hospitals get full quicker, Ramaphosa said. We break down how SARS-CoV-2 has changed and how that might impact South Africa's vaccine rollout.

Remote learning is set to dramatically change the academic landscape

Maverick Citizen | 18 January 2021

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic during the 2020 academic year saw almost all contact universities around the world faced with an urgent need to swiftly transition to an online, remote or blended approach to teaching and learning if there was to be any hope of salvaging the academic year. In doing so, institutions had to be cognisant of the needs and requirements of all stakeholders, including technical and academic staff, regulatory bodies, advisory boards, auditors, and many others. Most importantly, of course, were the needs of their students, who were presented with all manner of challenges, leading many to finally realise the multitude of difficulties that students are really faced with.

COVID-19: insights and lessons with Prof Marc Mendelson

University of Cape Town | 19 January 2021

“Without rapid vaccination of at least two thirds of the population, we (South Africa) are not going to get to population immunity, and without that, we will see another wave.” This was according to Professor Marc Mendelson, who presented a virtual Summer School lecture titled “COVID-19 insights and lessons” on Saturday, 16 January 2021. Professor Mendelson is the head of the Division of Infectious Diseases and HIV Medicine at Groote Schuur Hospital, the immediate past president of the International Society for Infectious Diseases and the past president of the Federation of Infectious Diseases Societies of Southern Africa. South Africa is currently gripped by a second wave of COVID-19 infections, and scientists have identified a new variant – 501.V2 – which is driving the infection surge in the country. “[Globally], this pandemic has been the greatest challenge to the public health system that we’ve ever seen, and it’s associated with a scientific endeavour that we have never seen before,” Mendelson said. “We’re definitely better off a year down the line, but there are a huge number of things that we need to answer. As a country we still face deep problems with severe issues around vaccine strategy, and we haven’t even talked about vaccine denial.”

How Telehealth is making Healthcare More Inclusive for Millions

Healthline | 19 January 2021

In the year since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, telemedicine — healthcare appointments and consultations provided at home through video conferencing and mobile apps — has increasingly become the norm. To avoid long stays in waiting rooms, and out of caution over risk of possible COVID-19 exposure, people have viewed telehealth appointments as a method of maintaining contact with their health providers while staying safe. Beyond the appeal of attending a doctor’s appointment from the comfort and safety of home, the telehealth phenomenon has, in some instances, made healthcare approachable and more accessible to people often stigmatized from the traditional medical system. Over the past year, as more providers have embraced this kind of technology, services have emerged specifically tailored to providing accessible, more inclusive care to women, LGBTQIA+ people, Black and brown communities, among many others. These services aim to offer alternatives to traditional — sometimes exclusionary — healthcare settings. As we continue to navigate a world defined and reshaped by COVID-19, what role will telehealth continue to play, especially in addressing groups that have faced societal, cultural, economic, and even geographic barriers to quality care?

Similar symptoms could see malaria pose more of a threat than Covid-19

IOL | 19 January 2021

Malaria may pose a more immediate threat than Covid-19 because some of the symptoms of the two infections are similar, said co-founder of Goodbye Malaria, Sherwin Charles. He said malaria proved to be deadlier faster and it was therefore essential to test for both infections. “When comparing both diseases, malaria is the more immediate threat and should be tested for and treated first. That is not to say that you should disregard any Covid-19 precautions in the process, but malaria needs to be ruled out first.”

Young children infected with the coronavirus have one SIXTEENTH of the viral load of over-80s - and rapid antigen tests 'are less sensitive for youngsters than adults', study claims

dailymail.co.uk | 19 January 2021

Primary school-aged children infected with the coronavirus have much smaller viral loads than adults with Covid-19, a study has found. Viral load — the amount of virus a person harbours in their nose and throat — is believed by some scientists to be linked to transmissibility, although there is debate over these claims. Data from public health officials in the Netherlands reveals over-80s have a viral load 16 times bigger than children under the age of 12. Rapid antigen tests, like ones suggested for use in schools and airports, are also likely to be less accurate for children than adults, due to this smaller load, the researchers say.

Fauci: US to repeal anti-abortion rule on aid and join Covax vaccine scheme

The Guardian | 21 January 2021

The Biden administration will repeal anti-abortion restrictions on American aid and join the international vaccine-sharing scheme Covax, Anthony Fauci has announced in remarks signalling a major turnaround in US global health policy. Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, announced the changes in a speech to the World Health Organization on Thursday morning after being

chosen to head the US delegation to the global health group in one of the first acts of Joe Biden's presidency. "President Biden will be revoking the 'Mexico City policy' in the coming days as part of his broader commitment to protect women's health and advance gender equality at home and around the world," Fauci told the group's annual executive board meeting. The Mexico City policy, also known as the "global gag rule", bans foreign NGOs from performing or promoting abortions as a condition of receiving US family planning aid. Introduced by Ronald Reagan in 1984, it has been repealed by every Democratic president and reinstated by every Republican one since.

Asked and answered: Six things you need to know about the new COVID variant in South Africa

Bhekisisa | 21 January 2021

South Africa's department of health gathered the country's best and brightest for a virtual briefing on Monday evening. Here scientists presented the latest findings on a variant of the new coronavirus — called 501Y.V2. This variant was first identified in South Africa in 2020 by a genomics team led by the KwaZulu-Natal Research Innovation and Sequencing Platform (KRISP) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Following the December announcement of the new variant, researchers have been working to answer key questions about what this means for South Africa's epidemic.

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TRAINING AND RESOURCES

Healthcare Technology in 4IR Short Learning Programme (SLP) April 2021

Offered by the University of Johannesburg, this programme aims to develop knowledge of a spectrum of healthcare innovations and technologies that arise with the increasing automation of medical devices. Such knowledge is essential in determining the justifiability of promoting the implementation of health technology in 4IR within the South African setting.

Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19

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PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

2020 edition of the South African Health Review, now out!

The Health Systems Trust is proud to announce the official online release of one of its flagship publications, the 2020 edition of the South African Health Review (SAHR). Chapters in the Review provide information on the multitude of challenges associated with providing a seamless continuum of appropriate and adequate care for persons with disabilities in the public health sector. These challenges include human resource constraints, fragmented and under-resourced rehabilitation services, lack of appropriate assistive devices, and the adoption of an overwhelmingly medicalised approach to disability, all of which translate to poor availability, affordability and access to health services for persons living with disabilities. This results in many persons with disabilities being denied the opportunity to reach their full potential. Now live on HST's [website](#).

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CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Ending the neglect to attain the Sustainable Development Goals: a road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021-2030

Invitation to the World Health Organization's (WHO) Formal launch of "Ending the neglect to attain the Sustainable Development Goals: a road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021-2030"

HIVR4P conference

The 4th HIV Research for Prevention Conference (#HIVR4P // Virtual) is just one week away! There is still time left to register and take part in the global conference exploring the latest in biomedical HIV prevention research and implementation. With a combination of live, taped and on-demand presentations across four conference days (27 & 28 Jan and 3 & 4 Feb) HIVR4P // Virtual will include the world's leading HIV prevention researchers, implementers and advocates, along with the latest science in 29 research categories.

Invitation to free British Medical Association (BMJ) webinar on school closures and COVID-19

School closures have been a controversial issue from the start of the #COVID19 pandemic. Join international experts and invited guests, for this free webinar which will discuss all aspects of the issue. Full programme and registration here: <http://ow.ly/Oi8a50Db2Bh>.

International AIDS Society's (IAS) COVID-19 Conference: Prevention!

Recognizing the urgent need to advance the COVID-19 pandemic response, the IAS COVID-19 Conference: Prevention will feature the latest in prevention related science, policy and practice. The conference will take place virtually on Tuesday, 2 February 2021 – and will include invited-speaker sessions and abstract presentations.

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) Unit: Facility Team Leaders

Closing Date: 27 January 2021

Area Monitoring and Evaluation Officer in eThekweni

Closing Date: 27 January 2021

District Training Co-ordinator

Closing Date: 1 February 2021

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