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ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

Tuberculosis and COVID-19 interaction: A review of biological, clinical and public health effects

Science Direct (Pulmonology Journal) | March-April 2021

D Visca, CWM Ong, S Tiberi, R Centris and L D'Ambrosio, et al

Evidence is accumulating on the interaction between tuberculosis (TB) and COVID-19. The aim of the present review is to report the available evidence on the interaction between these two infections. Differences and similarities of TB and COVID-19, their immunological features, diagnostics, epidemiological and clinical characteristics and public health implications are discussed. The key published documents and guidelines on the topic have been reviewed. Based on the immunological mechanism involved, a shared dysregulation of immune responses in COVID-19 and TB has been found, suggesting a dual risk posed by co-infection worsening COVID-19 severity and favouring TB disease progression.

Obesity Management in Primary Care During and Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Journal for Nurse Practitioners | April 2021

Wudeneh Mulugeta

With 6.1 million United States cases as of early September 2020, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is presenting unprecedented challenges to primary care. As a complex multifactorial chronic disease, obesity is a significant risk for severe COVID-19 complications associated with high morbidity and mortality. Sustainable lifestyle changes and weight loss can be effective to address obesity and its complications. With COVID-19 expected to persist for the foreseeable future, treatment and prevention of obesity is more imperative than ever. This report summarizes how obesity management and lifestyle counseling can be incorporated and applied in primary care during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Validation of a Clinical Decision Rule to Predict Abuse in Young Children Based on Bruising Characteristics

JAMA Network | 14 April 2021

Mary Clyde Pierce, Kim Kaczor, Douglas Lorenz, Gina Bertocci, Amanda Fingarson et al.

Bruising is the most common injury from physical child abuse and the most common injury to be overlooked or misdiagnosed as nonabusive before an abuse-related fatality or near-fatality in a young child. Several studies identified bruises as the preceding injury to abusive head trauma. Failure to recognize bruising caused by physical child abuse is a missed opportunity and an error in medical decision-making that contributes directly to poor patient outcomes. Published evidence confirms that measurable differences exist between bruising from nonabusive and abusive injury in infants and young children. An evidence-based screening tool may prevent these high-stakes failures.

Saliva as a gold-standard sample for SARS-CoV-2 detection

The Lancet Respiratory Medicine | 19 April 2021

Steph Tan, Orchid Allicock, Mari Armstrong-Hough, Anne Wyllie

As COVID-19 continues to strain public health systems and vaccination programmes race against new variants that might be more transmissible or capable of evading immune responses, the urgent need for simple, accessible, and frequent testing remains. Inexpensive, scalable, and sustainable strategies that allow easily repeatable testing over time need to be made widely available. This is possible by testing saliva. The gold-standard sample for SARS-CoV-2 detection defaulted to the nasopharyngeal swab because of its role in detection of other upper respiratory tract pathogens. Demand for swabs drove a cascading collapse of supply chains and worsened shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) required by health-care workers for sample collection. As the need for mass testing and frequent, repeated sampling surged, the urgency for alternative sample types became apparent.

Children in All Policies 2030: a new initiative to implement the recommendations of the WHO–UNICEF–Lancet Commission

The Lancet | 20 April 2021

Sarah Dalglish, Anthony Costello, Helen Clark, Awa Coll-Seck

In February, 2020, we published the WHO–UNICEF–Lancet Commission report *A future for the world's children?* The Commission called for a new global movement to put the health and wellbeing of children and adolescents at the centre of national and global efforts to achieve sustainable development. Events have reinforced our message, as children's needs have not been prioritised during the COVID-19 pandemic. In many countries, children and adolescents have missed out on months of education and social contact with peers, gone hungry, missed immunisations, or been exposed to violence or abuse, contributing to adverse impacts on their mental health and wellbeing. Although the epidemiological evidence is still emerging, negative effects on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescent girls are also a concern. During the pandemic's first wave, only 2% of the fiscal stimulus in high-income countries was allocated specifically to support children. And despite lockdowns in countries around the world, carbon dioxide emissions fell by only about 6% in 2020 and have already rebounded, revealing the lack of urgent, dedicated action on the climate crisis, which continues to jeopardise the future of all children.

The Collateral Damage of the COVID-19 Outbreak on Mental Health and Psychiatry

International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health | 22 April 2021

Frederick Simon, Maria Schenk, Denise Palm, Frank Faltraco, Johannes Thome

The potential consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak are multifarious and remain largely unknown. Deaths as a direct result of the condition are already in the millions, and the number of indirect deaths is likely to be even higher. Pre-existing historical inequalities are compounded by the virus, driving increased rates of infection and deaths amongst people who use drugs and alcohol, those belonging to racial-ethnic minority groups, poorer communities, LBGTQ+ populations, healthcare workers, and other members of the care economy; all of whom are already at increased risk of adverse mental health effects. In this paper we suggest that a central role of mental health practitioners is advocacy: both for people who use psychiatric services and for those who, due to the effects of the pandemic, are at an increased risk of needing to do so.

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RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

PEPFAR COP/ROP 2021 Planning Process

PEPFAR | 2 April 2021

The #PEPFAR COP/ROP 2021 planning process is in full swing! Keep track of the latest happenings on the new COP/ROP landing page.

Take a mental break from pain

Harvard Men's Health Watch | April 2021

Your mind is a powerful pain remedy when given the chance. Science continues to show how mindfulness can manage pain — and it doesn't take years to master. "Using mindfulness is a way for older adults to treat ongoing chronic pain and the occasional flare-up without having to always rely on medication," says Ellen Slawsby, director of pain services at Harvard-affiliated Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine.

Hopes remain pinned on speedy resumption of Johnson & Johnson vaccine roll-out

Maverick Citizen | 19 April 2021

While the Eastern Cape, a province especially hard hit by the second wave of coronavirus infections, has been reporting a steady uptick in cases since the Easter weekend, no new infections have been reported among health workers in five districts. No new coronavirus infections and no new deaths have been reported among health workers in five of the Eastern Cape's districts, with hospital admissions also hitting a plateau, according to the province's latest epidemiological report. The Sisonke Protocol, allowing health workers early access to the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, was initially rolled out to two centres in the province, but the number of centres was later increased.

Statement on the seventh meeting of the International Health Regulations (2005) Emergency Committee regarding the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic

World Health Organization | 19 April 2021

The seventh meeting of the Emergency Committee convened by the WHO Director-General under the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR) regarding the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) took place on Thursday, 15 April 2021 from 12:00 to 16:30 Geneva time (CEST). Proceedings of the meeting: Members and Advisors of the Emergency Committee were convened by videoconference. The Director-General welcomed the Committee, expressed concern over the continued rise in cases and deaths, and the need to scale up the global vaccination efforts. He thanked the committee for their continued support and advice. Representatives of the Office of Legal Counsel (LEG) and the Department of Compliance, Risk Management, and Ethics (CRE) briefed the members on their roles and responsibilities. The Ethics Officer from CRE provided the Members and Advisers with an overview of the WHO Declaration of Interest process. The Members and Advisers were made aware of their individual responsibility to disclose to WHO, in a timely manner, any interests of a personal, professional, financial, intellectual or commercial nature that may give rise to a perceived or direct conflict of interest. They were additionally reminded of their duty to maintain the confidentiality of the meeting discussions and the work of the Committee. Each member who was present was surveyed and no conflicts of interest were identified. Two members of the Committee and one advisor who were members of the joint international team participating in the WHO-convened Global Study of Origins of SARS-CoV-2 agreed not to contribute to potential recommendations made by the Committee regarding the investigations concerning the origin and emergence of the virus. The Secretariat turned the meeting over to the Chair, Professor Didier Houssin. Professor Houssin also expressed concern over the current trends with the COVID-19 pandemic and reviewed the objectives and agenda of the meeting.

Childhood obesity should be regarded as a threat to children's rights, says expert

Health-E News | 20 April 2021

Increasing rates of obesity among children should be framed as a critical issue, according to global health experts. Addressing overweight and obesity early on could prevent the development of other noncommunicable diseases. Around the world, more than 340 million children and adolescents are affected by overweight and obesity. Over 38 million children under the age of five are already living with obesity, suffering the physical and emotional impact of the disease. "Children living with NCDs often experience stigma, negative impact on their well-being. They can have difficulty with their peer relations and they can undermine their learning potential as well," said Jo Jewell, a nutrition specialist. "So this is something that can affect the developments and well-being of children in many dimensions." Jewell, a

nutritionist at the United Nations children's agency UNICEF, was speaking during a webinar Noncommunicable Diseases (NCD) Alliance. Experts met to discuss how to implement the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Global Diabetes Compact.

COVID-19: Wastewater surveillance could help spot third wave

Spotlight | 20 April 2021

As part of a project that started in July 2020, every week staff from the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) wastewater surveillance programme collect samples from wastewater treatment plants in the Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Limpopo, and Gauteng. These samples are then tested for fragments of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The data generated in this way is then shared with the public on a dashboard on the SAMRC website that is updated weekly. If a substantial third wave of COVID-19 is to hit South Africa, chances are it will be evident in this data.

How South Africa's COVID vaccine injury fund will work

Bhekisisa | 20 April 2021

South Africa's vaccine injury fund will be headed up by retired former Chief Justice Sandile Ngcobo, who led the Competition Commission's investigation into the private health sector. South Africa is too wealthy to qualify for the World Health Organisation's COVAX vaccine injury fund and had to establish its own fund to make bilateral deals for COVID jabs. You can claim from the fund if you had a severe side-effect as a result of a COVID jab bought and distributed by the South African government. South Africa has secured enough vaccine doses to vaccinate 46-million people against COVID-19 — but the agreements to get shots into the country come with a catch. In order to secure jabs, vaccine manufacturers require the South African government to exempt them at least partly from liability and potential lawsuits in the case of any severe side effects the shots may cause. The solution: a no-fault compensation fund.

South Africa sees Covid-19 surge in 3 provinces

BusinessTech | 21 April 2021

The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), a division of the National Health Laboratory Service, has noted an upsurge in Covid-19 cases in the Northern Cape, North West and Free State Provinces. In a statement on Wednesday, the NICD said it had noted this development as it continues to monitor Covid-19 trends nationally. "The team is working with the respective provinces to ascertain whether the rise in cases can be attributed to cluster outbreaks, and recommend increased testing and contact tracing to contain the situation and limit further spread," said Senior Epidemiologist at the NICD, Dr Harry Moultrie.

Opinion: Treat us better if you want us to keep coming back

People who miss appointments or stop taking their treatment often report being treated badly by healthcare workers when they return to health facilities. This fear of being reprimanded discourages people from going back to the clinic to seek support and receive their treatment. Monitoring done by Ritshidze (a community monitoring project) from October to December 2020 shows that poor staff attitudes remain a major barrier to seeking and staying in care. Reports of staff reactions to patients who missed a facility visit for ARV collection were often unwelcoming, unempathetic, or at worst human rights violations.

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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.

EVDS Covid-19 Vaccination Registration

Registration for vaccination is now open for citizens 60 years and above.

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PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

COVID-19 situation reports – 2021 Unicef South Africa

A snapshot of current needs and response.

Gender Equality – Flying Blind in a Time of Crisis: 2021 Global Health 20/20 Report

Now in its 4th year, the Global Health 50/50 Report finds that action to dismantle gender inequality inside organisations and to apply a gender lens in health programmes remains scarce.

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that gender matters - to career pathways, to people's risk of disease and death, to shaping equitable, effective health policies. Yet the 2021 report reveals that the vast majority of activities to address the health impacts of COVID-19 ignored the role of gender. In a male-default world, the report finds that gender as a driver of everyone's health, including that of men and boys, remains under-addressed. The result: gender-blind pandemic responses that are less effective than they should be, with grave consequences for the health of people everywhere.

Flying Blind also reports the appointment of yet another cohort of mostly male global health leaders, predominantly from high-income countries, with the mandate to exert influence over the health and wellbeing of people worldwide. Despite substantial rhetoric, the data reveals little progress towards gender equality and diversity in leadership across the health sector and no progress on closing the gender pay gap among UK organisations mandated to report on it.

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CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Webinar on capacity-building in the health sector to strengthen its participation in chemicals and waste management

When: 27 April 2021 14:00 – 16:00 CET

Best practices for creating a successful telepsychiatry program

When: Tue, Apr 27, 2021 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM SAST

COVID-19 has been a wakeup call to the industry about mental health accessibility challenges as patients in need of psychiatric and behavioral health services increase drastically. Many healthcare organizations are struggling to keep up with the influx of behavioral and mental health patient volumes as they face staffing, capacity and reimbursement challenges. Telepsychiatry is a well-researched strategy to provide high-quality, accessible mental health services to patients. But the technology can be implemented and administered incorrectly, leading to poor patient care and a dissatisfied clinical workforce.

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The Health Systems Trust currently has no available jobs, but please do have a look at the:

HUMAN SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL – HUMAN AND SOCIAL CAPABILITIES: Various

Closing Date: 26 April 2021

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