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ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

Diabetes in a TB and HIV-endemic South African population: Analysis of a virtual cohort using routine health data

PLOS One | 5 May 2021

Tsaone Tamuhla, Joel A. Dave, Peter Raubenheimer, Nicki Tiffin

It is widely accepted that people living with diabetes (PLWD) are at increased risk of infectious disease, yet there is a paucity of epidemiology studies on the relationship between diabetes and infectious disease in SSA. In a region with a high burden of infectious disease, this has serious consequences for PLWD.

A scoping review of theories and conceptual frameworks used to analyse health financing policy processes in sub-Saharan Africa

Oxford Academic | 24 May 2021

Catherine Jones, Lara Gautier, Valéry Ridde

Health financing policies are critical policy instruments to achieve Universal Health Coverage, and they constitute a key area in policy analysis literature for the health policy and systems research (HPSR) field. Previous reviews have shown that analyses of policy change in low- and middle-income countries are under-theorised. This study aims to explore which theories and conceptual frameworks have been used in research on policy processes of health financing policy in sub-Saharan Africa and to identify challenges and lessons learned from their use.

Women empowerment indicators and uptake of child health services in sub-Saharan Africa: a multilevel analysis using cross-sectional data from 26 countries

Oxford Academic Journal of Public Health | 31 May 2021

Abdul-Aziz Seidu, Bright Opoku Ahinkorah, Edward Ameyaw, Eugene Budu, Sanni Yaya

The sustainable development goal 3, target 2, seeks to reduce under-five mortality to as low as 25 deaths per 1000 live births by 2030. As such, seeking child health services has become a priority concern for all countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Evidence suggests that empowered women are more likely to seek child health services. Hence, this study examined the association between women empowerment indicators and uptake of child health services in SSA.

40 years of HIV/AIDS: a painful anniversary

The Lancet | 1 June 2021

Editorial

40 years ago, on June 5, 1981, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report included a report of a cluster of pneumocystis pneumonia cases among gay men in Los Angeles. Rare life-threatening conditions among men, women, and children were also being seen outside the USA but had not yet been reported—precursors to the coming HIV/AIDS pandemic. Since then, UNAIDS estimates that HIV/AIDS has killed 32.7 million people, with 75.7 million HIV infections globally. Today, the tools exist to eliminate HIV. Combination prevention interventions, such as pre-exposure prophylaxis, are highly effective at reducing HIV acquisition through sex, and antiretroviral therapy for those who have HIV can render the virus undetectable and untransmissible. Yet in 2019 alone, 690 000 people died from HIV/AIDS. Why are we so far off track in achieving the UN 2030 global target of ending AIDS?

Has the relationship between wealth and HIV risk in Sub-Saharan Africa changed over time? A temporal, gendered and hierarchical analysis

SMM – Population Health | Vol 15, September 2021

Emily Andrus, Sanyu Mojola, Elizabeth Moran, Marisa Eisenberg, Jon Zelner

This study examines the relationship between wealth and HIV infection in Sub-Saharan Africa to determine whether and how this relationship has varied over time, within and across countries, by gender, and urban environment. The analysis draws on DHS and AIS data from 27 Sub-Saharan African countries, which spanned the 14 years between 2003 and 2016. We first use logistic regression analyses to assess the relationship between individual wealth, HIV infection and gender by country and year stratified on urban environment. We then use meta-regression analyses to assess the relationship between country level measures of wealth and the odds of HIV infection by gender and individual level wealth, stratified on urban environment. We find that there is a persistent and positive relationship between wealth and the odds of HIV infection across countries, but that the strength of this association has weakened over time. The rate of attenuation does not appear to differ between urban/rural strata. Likewise, we also find that these associations were most pronounced for women and that this relationship was persistent over the study period and across urban and rural strata. Overall, our findings suggest that the relationship between wealth and HIV infection is beginning to reverse and that in the coming years, the relationship between wealth and HIV infection in Sub-Saharan Africa may more clearly mirror the predominant global picture.

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RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

Poor prognosis: Joburg's public healthcare is in critical condition

Daily Maverick | 27 May 2021

Johannesburg's public health services are on life support and the prognosis is poor. There are no signs of urgency to bring Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital (CMJAH) back on line to full function after a fire forced it to close. Not far away, both Helen Joseph and Rahima Moosa hospitals are operating under extremely difficult conditions: their water supply has been intermittent for days. CMJAH is one of the biggest hospitals in the southern hemisphere. It was closed in April after a fire that started in an underground parking area caused a section of the hospital to collapse, rendering the entire facility unsafe. Since then patients and staff have been relocated to other hospitals at considerable cost to the overburdened health network. The Gauteng Health Department and the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development insist they are acting as swiftly as possible to reopen the hospital. But six weeks after the fire the facility remains closed. No one will commit to a timeframe for when repairs and safety compliance will be completed. So-called contingencies for alternative arrangements for patient care are also not translating into actual care for many patients and there are still no answers as to who dropped the ball in the first place to allow a flagship national healthcare asset literally to go up in smoke.

The Sisonke trial rewrote history. Eight lessons for the nationwide vaccine roll-out

Bhekisisa | 27 May 2021

South Africa's 14-week long Sisonke study forced research teams — 30 of them — to move from conceptualization to implementation within 17 days. The programme, which was a collaboration between the health department, the South African Medical Research Council, the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation, the Centre for the Aids Programme of Research in South Africa, Janssen and Johnson & Johnson (J&J), used J&J's one-shot vaccine to immunise 479 768 healthcare workers between mid-February and mid-May. Health workers are at a greatly increased risk of contracting SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, compared to the general population. Most countries, therefore, target them first for vaccination, so that they could in turn care for hospital patients and vaccinate people. Within two and a half weeks Sisonke researchers had to learn the results of the Ensemble trial (the study that tested the efficacy of the J&J vaccine), develop a study protocol, obtain regulatory and ethics approval, get jabs into the country and ensure their delivery to vaccination sites so that we could administer the first shot on 17 February. The gap between conceptualization and implementation is usually considerably longer, with years lagging between establishing the benefits of an intervention and scaling it up to the people who need it. To have achieved that in this short period was to rewrite history. For many of us who were veterans of the HIV pandemic and had lived that long struggle, it was a moment of hope and redemption — an example of what was possible when political will, science, hard work and a strong desire to act come together.

Child Protection Week: Protecting all children living in South Africa

Health-E News | 2 June 2021

Protecting all children living in South Africa is a top priority for this year's Child Protection Week. It was launched under the theme "Let us all protect children during and beyond Covid-19". The launch included the voices of children from across all nine provinces, with a special focus on child migrants. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, one in four migrants who are living in South Africa are children, that's about 642 000 migrant and refugee children estimated to be living in the country. Deputy Minister of Social Development Henrietta Bogopane-Zulu emphasised the importance of ensuring that undocumented child migrants who are in the country either as refugees, asylum seekers or were born in South Africa to migrant women, are documented. "As we launch child protection week, one of the most important campaigns we as Social Development need to drive, together with Home Affairs and Health, is to educate foreign women of the importance of that piece of paper [recognition of birth document] because that child remains stateless until such time the holder of the recognition of birth document can put the child in the population register," said Bogopane-Zulu.

COVID: WHO renames UK and other variants with Greek letters

BBC | 2 June 2021

The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced a new naming system for variants of Covid-19. From now on the WHO will use Greek letters to refer to variants first detected in countries like the UK, South Africa and India. The UK variant for instance is labelled as Alpha, the South African Beta, and the Indian as Delta. The WHO said this was to simplify discussions but also to help remove some stigma from the names.

What's it like to get a COVID-19 vaccine? We take you on an inside tour of this site

Bhekisisa | 2 June 2021

COVID vaccination centres across the country opened on 17 May and by Monday, 31 May, over 500 000 people had received the first of two Pfizer doses. A small study that was conducted on 800 people in South Africa showed that the jab was 100% effective in preventing COVID-19 cases caused by the 501Y.V2 variant (now also called the Beta variant). This is the form of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, that causes COVID-19, that is now dominant in the country. A May paper in the New England Journal of Medicine found that the Pfizer jab had an effectiveness of 75% against infection with the Beta variant in Qatar's real-life roll-out, through which 385 853 people had received their first dose of the jab and 265 410 had been fully immunised.

Government to introduce stricter anti-smoking rules for South Africa

Business Tech | 2 June 2021

The department of health is pushing forward on a draft bill in an effort to get more stringent anti-smoking laws passed. The department's Lynn Moeng told EWN that the Control of Tobacco Products and Electronic Delivery Systems Bill is currently in the pipeline, and that government is working as 'fast as it

can' to have it processed. "We are now finalising the process and once we have done that before it even gets to Cabinet, it needs to be approved by a few technical committees," she said. "We are in the process where we'll now be able to submit to the various committees."

Op-ed: Govt urged to embrace the power of tech in the delivery of primary healthcare for all

Health-e News | 3 June 2021

The research released by Percept this week shows the real potential of technology in the effective delivery of primary healthcare services across South Africa. The research should thus be used as a road map to better healthcare services for all. By Shivani Ranchod, CEO of Percept. We looked at practical examples from across Africa and investigated how other countries used technology in their specific environments. Our work shows that a lot can be achieved despite existing problems such as poor technological literacy, poor uptake of smartphone capabilities, and poor power supply. We will be sharing our findings with key stakeholders in the health sector and hope that it will be valuable for their work improving healthcare service delivery for all. While Covid-19-linked recessions have highlighted the need for healthcare models that deliver primary healthcare in more cost-effective ways, the lockdowns have also created vast opportunities for the rapid growth and evolution of tech-enabled healthcare delivery models. In time, technological solutions will increasingly ensure that healthcare systems run more efficiently and effectively. It is their focus on specific points of the patient journey, or specific parts of the system, that their ability to ensure overall continuity of care and continued engagement with the primary healthcare system will require ongoing attention.

The end of medical aids in South Africa – and other questions raised around the NHI

Business Tech | 3 June 2021

Health groups are seeking further clarity around the exact details and workings of South Africa's new National Health Insurance (NHI) – specifically asking questions about how money is going to be pooled to fund the scheme. Presenting to parliament on the NHI on Tuesday (1 June), the Khayelitsha and Klipfonetin health forums said that a proper analysis is needed to see whether South Africa is in a financial position to even fund the NHI. The analysis should also look at whether there is sufficient trust by the public that government will be able to deliver an NHI that is inclusive of community participation in all facets, it said.

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TRAINING AND RESOURCES

HSTi offers accredited and non-accredited short courses and full programmes

The Health Systems Training Institute (HSTi) is the training arm of the Health Systems Trust (HST), a leading force in the South African public health sector. HST was established in 1992, on the brink of democracy in South Africa, and has since played a significant role in strengthening the national primary health system through health research, informatics, clinical support, capacity-building and training.

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PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

Families and parents are key to well-being of children

Did you know that in South Africa, about one-fifth (21,3%) of children aged 17 years and less, did not live with their parents? It may also surprise you to hear that this is against the international norm where the majority of children under 18 live with both their parents.¹ However, in South Africa, children are more often not co-resident with their biological parents. This is mainly due to labour migration of the parents as well as low marital rates of mothers. Consequently, many children are raised by their grandparents or other relatives, especially in rural areas. With the focus on International Day of Families (15 May) and Global Day of Parents (1 June) let's explore families and their support systems in South Africa.

COVID-19 lessons with Lunga: Our COVID-19 hero gets full marks for sharing key school safety tips

Meet our COVID-19 hero, Lunga, an unassuming COVID-19 savvy character with the sole purpose of educating 7 to 9-year old children about COVID-19 prevention at school. Through the COVID-19 Lessons with Lunga campaign, our young hero delivers key messages through educational posters, stimulating activity sheets and a series of visually appealing animated videos. The objective is that youngsters will understand that heroes do not always fly overhead or shoot spider webs from their wrists. True heroes can be found anywhere, it could be the person standing behind them in the queue, sitting next to them in the taxi, or it can be the reflection they see in the mirror. The message to little ones is simple, be like Lunga and be a COVID-19 hero.

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CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

International Conference on Applied Informatics for Health, Medical and Life Sciences (Digital)

International Conference on Applied Informatics for Health, Medical and Life Sciences aims to bring together leading academic scientists, researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of Applied Informatics for Health, Medical and Life Sciences. It also provides a premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners and educators to present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends, and concerns as well as practical challenges encountered and solutions adopted in the fields of Applied Informatics for Health, Medical and Life Sciences.

When: 7 – 8 June 2021

International Conference on Public Health and Disease Prevention (Digital)

International Conference on Public Health and Disease Prevention aims to bring together leading academic scientists, researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of Public Health and Disease Prevention. It also provides a premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners and educators to present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends, and concerns as well as practical challenges encountered and solutions adopted in the fields of Public Health and Disease Prevention.

When: 10 – 11 June 2021

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

VARIOUS VACANCIES – Department of Health

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