

HST Bulletin 14 December 2023

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ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

Womandla Health: development and rationale of a behavioral intervention to support HIV treatment adherence among postpartum women in South Africa

BMC Women's Health | 6 December 2023

Jennifer A. Pellowski, Destry Jensen, Nokwazi Tsawe, Christopher Colvin, Susan Cu-Uvin, et al.

While Option B + has made great strides in eliminating vertical transmission of HIV and improving access to lifelong antiretroviral therapy (ART) for women, the postpartum period remains a risk period for disengagement from HIV care and non-adherence.

The Relationship between Age at Initiation of Regular Drinking of Alcohol and Viral Suppression Status, and Depression Symptoms Among People Living with HIV in South-Western Uganda

Aids and behaviour | 7 December 2023

Raymond Felix Odokonyero, Robin Fatch, Nneka I. Emenyonu, Debbie M. Cheng, Christine Ngabirano, et al.

Alcohol use is an important factor in achieving and maintaining viral suppression and optimal mental health among persons with HIV (PWH), however, the effect of age at first regular drinking on viral suppression and depression remains poorly understood.

Assessment of post-COVID-19 fatigue among female survivors 2 years after hospital discharge: a nested case-control study

BMC Public Health | 7 December 2023

Yidan Ye, Chuyue Xiong, Yang Dai, Yan Wang, Xinyue Yang, et al.

Fatigue is a common symptom of long COVID syndrome. Compared to male survivors, females have a higher incidence of post-COVID fatigue. Therefore, long-term follow-up is necessary to understand which groups of females are more vulnerable to post-COVID fatigue.

Interruptions in HIV and Behavioral Health Care for Criminal-Legal Involved People Living with HIV Following Implementation of Decarceration and Shelter in Place in San Francisco, California

Aids and behaviour | 7 December 2023

Asa Clemenzi-Allen, Jillian Hebert, Michael Alistair Reid, Tyler Mains, Hali Hammer, et al.

Decarceration policies, enacted for SARS-CoV-2 mitigation in carceral settings, potentially exacerbated barriers to care for people living with HIV (PWH) with criminal legal involvement (CLI) during Shelter-in-Place (SIP) by limiting opportunities for engagement in provisions of HIV and behavioral health care. We compared health care engagement for PWH with CLI in San Francisco, California before and after decarceration and SIP using interrupted time series analyses.

Culturally Relevant Africultural Coping Moderates the Association Between Discrimination and Antiretroviral Adherence Among Sexual Minority Black Americans Living with HIV

Aids and behaviour | 7 December 2023

Glenn J. Wagner, Laura M. Bogart, David J. Klein, Sean J. Lawrence, Kathy Goggin, et al.

Exposure to discrimination has been linked to lower HIV antiretroviral therapy (ART) adherence and poor HIV care outcomes among Black Americans. Coping has been shown to mitigate the harmful effects of discrimination on health behaviors, but the use of cultural relevant Africultural coping strategies is understudied as a moderator of the association between intersectional discrimination and ART adherence among Black Americans. We used adjusted logistic regression to test whether Africultural coping strategies (cognitive/emotional debriefing; collective; spiritual-centered; ritual-centered) moderated associations between multiple forms of discrimination (HIV, sexual orientation, race) and good ART adherence (minimum of 75% or 85% of prescribed doses taken, as measured by electronic monitoring in separate analyses) among 92 sexual minority Black Americans living with HIV.

Patient-centered Engagement as a Mediator in the Associations of Healthcare Discrimination, Pain Care Denial, and Later Substance Use Among a Sample of Predominately African Americans Living with HIV

Aids and Behaviour | 7 December 2023

Tuo-Yen Tseng, Mary M. Mitchell, Geetanjali Chander, Carl Latkin, Caitlin Kennedy, et al.

Chronic pain is prevalent and often under-addressed among people with HIV and people who use drugs, likely compounding the stress of discrimination in healthcare, and self-medicating along with its associated overdose risk or other problematic coping. Due to challenges in treating pain and HIV in the context of substance use, collaborative, patient-centered patient-provider engagement (PCE) may be particularly important for mitigating the impact of pain on illicit drug use and promoting sustained recovery. We examined whether PCE with primary care provider (PCE-PCP) mediated the effects of pain, discrimination, and denial of prescription pain medication on later substance use for pain among a sample of 331 predominately African Americans with HIV and a drug use history in Baltimore, Maryland, USA.

There is no path to ending AIDS by 2030 without improving human rights

Journal of the International Aids Society | 8 December 2023

Stefan Baral, Gregorio Millett, Omar Syarif, Nguissali Turpin, Sheree Schwartz, et al.

2023 has witnessed worsening human rights contexts around the world with increasing conflict and violence, decreased legal protections and sustained or even increasing criminalization of historically marginalized communities. While the relationship between health and human rights has long been established, the evidence supporting this relationship available in 2023 is unequivocal in demonstrating that the fulfilment of human rights is central to improving the health of individuals and the communities of which they are a part. The relationship between health and human rights has been established for many infectious and non-communicable diseases but has been a defining characteristic of the HIV pandemic since its emergence over 40 years ago. In any location or population where human rights are violated, HIV risks increase.

Predictors of information needs among women with breast cancer receiving adjuvant therapy at Tikur Anbessa specialized hospital, Addis Ababa Ethiopia: a cross-sectional study

BMC Women's Health | 8 December 2023

Sosina W. Tilahun, Leul D. Kitaw and Nete T. Yusuf

Women undergoing adjuvant therapy for breast cancer have diverse information needs that remain unfulfilled. Extensive research has shown that access to relevant information about their condition can significantly enhance the quality of life for these women, making it an essential part of cancer care. However, various clinical and socioeconomic factors influence the information needs of these women. Hence, the primary aim of this study is to identify predictors of the information needs of women undergoing adjuvant therapy for breast cancer. In addition, this study will also describe the preferred sources of information and the optimal timing for its acquisition.

The mediating effect of psychological resilience between social support and anxiety/depression in people living with HIV/AIDS—a study from China

BMC Public Health | 8 December 2023

Yongbing Sun, Bing Song, Cheng Zhen, Chao Zhang, Juan Cheng, Tianjun Jiang, et al.

Objective: To understand the relationship between psychological resilience in social support and anxiety/depression in people living with HIV/AIDS and to verify whether there is a mediating effect.
Methods: The questionnaire was administered to 161 people living with HIV/AIDS in a hospital. The questionnaire contained a general questionnaire, the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), the Psychological Resilience Inventory (CD-RICS), and the Social Collaborative Support Scale (PSSS), and Pearson correlation analyses were used to explore the correlation between the factors and anxiety/depression, stratified linear regression analyses were used to validate the mediation model, and the bootstrap method was used to test for mediating effects.

Capacity assessment and spatial analysis of cervical cancer services in The Gambia

BMC Women's Health | 9 December 2023

Meghan E. Mali, Ousman Sanyang, Katherine L. Harris, Justin Sorensen, Mustapha Bittaye, et al.

Cervical cancer is the most common cancer and the leading cause of cancer-related death in Gambian women. The Gambian Ministry of Health is striving to improve access to screening, diagnostic, and treatment services for cervical cancer, but comprehensive data on currently available services is limited making it challenging to appropriately prioritize the ideal next steps for expanding care. This study aims to describe the current services available for the prevention, screening, and treatment of cervical cancer in The Gambia and provide suggestions for expanding geographic access to care.

Research priorities in HIV, aging and rehabilitation: building on a framework with the Canada-International HIV and Rehabilitation Research Collaborative

AIDS Research and Therapy | 9 December 2023

Kelly K. O'Brien, Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco, Kelly Birtwell, Graeme Donald, Darren A. Brown, et al.

In 2016, the Canada-International HIV and Rehabilitation Research Collaborative established a framework of research priorities in HIV, aging and rehabilitation. Our aim was to review and identify any new emerging priorities from the perspectives of people living with HIV, clinicians, researchers, and representatives from community organizations.

Physiotherapy practice in women's health: awareness and attitudes of obstetricians and gynecologists in Ghana

BMC Women's Health | 11 December 2023

Yaa Boatemaa Koranteng, Kwame Adu-Bonsaffoh & Bertha Oppong-Yeboah

Physiotherapy is relatively well integrated into women's health in many high-income countries (HICs) as compared to low- and middle- countries (LMICs) like Ghana. Suboptimal integration of physiotherapy in

modern obstetrics and gynecology especially in low resource settings is partly due to issues related to the awareness and attitudes of referring physicians. This study assessed the awareness and attitude levels towards physiotherapy in women's health among obstetricians/gynecologists and factors associated with its utilization in Ghana.

Effectiveness of mobile technology and utilization of maternal and neonatal healthcare in low and middle-income countries (LMICs): a systematic review

BMC Women's Health | 11 December 2023

Prasenjit De & Manas Ranjan Pradhan

Maternal and neonatal mortality are important indicators of the development of a nation and pose a severe health concern, especially in developing and Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs). Healthcare providers use various mobile technologies as tools to provide antenatal, delivery, and postnatal care and thereby promote maternal and child health. We conducted a systematic review to critically assess the existing literature on the effectiveness of mobile phone technology in maternal and neonatal healthcare (MNH) utilization, especially in LMICs in Asia and Africa.

Addressing HIV stigma in healthcare, community, and legislative settings in Central and Eastern Europe

AIDS Research and Therapy | 11 December 2023

Ana-Maria Schweitzer, Arian Dišković, Veronica Krongauz, Julie Newman, Janez Tomažič & Nina Yancheva

Surging HIV prevalence across countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is largely a result of poor HIV care engagement and a lack of comprehensive support for key populations. This is fostered by widespread stigma across healthcare, community, and legislative settings.

Institutional trust is a distinct construct related to vaccine hesitancy and refusal

BMC Public Health | 12 December 2023

Sekoul Krastev, Oren Krajden, Zoua M. Vang, Fernanda Pérez-Gay Juárez, Elizaveta Solomonova, et al.

Vaccine hesitancy is driven by a heterogeneous and changing set of psychological, social and historical phenomena, requiring multidisciplinary approaches to its study and intervention. Past research has brought to light instances of both interpersonal and institutional trust playing an important role in vaccine uptake. However, no comprehensive study to date has specifically assessed the relative importance of these two categories of trust as they relate to vaccine behaviors and attitudes.

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RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

Antibodies Passed Through Placenta May Improve Survival for Infants with HIV

Poz | 5 December 2023

Certain antibodies that pass through the placenta are associated with the improved survival of infants who acquire HIV through nursing, according to findings published in the journal *Open Forum Infectious Diseases*. The Kenya-based study observed that preexisting antibodies that target a specific region of Env—a protein on HIV's surface—were correlated with delayed HIV acquisition in infants exposed to the virus as well as a lower amount of virus circulating in the blood of infants who acquired HIV. Both of these conditions are known to help extend survival in infants with HIV.

SA firm to produce contraceptive anti-HIV vaginal rings

Juta Medical Brief | 6 December 2023

Within the next few years, South African company Kiara Health of Johannesburg is to start manufacturing

the vaginal ring contraceptive for women, which protects against HIV and which Aids experts say should eventually make them cheaper and more readily available. The non-profit US-headquartered Population Council said last week that 1m of the dapivirine vaginal rings (DPV-VR) could be produced annually. The device releases a drug that helps prevent HIV infections and is authorised by nearly a dozen countries as well as the World Health Organisation, reports VOA News. The council owns the rights to the rings – currently made by a Swedish company – thousands of which are available to women in Africa at no cost, purchased by donors. The ring releases the antiretroviral drug dapivirine in slow doses over a month, and currently costs \$12 to \$16, but experts expect the price to drop once it is widely produced in Africa. Developers are also working on a version that will last up to three months, which should also lower the yearly cost.

95% decline in new HIV infections in Amsterdam

Aidsmap | 6 December 2023

New cases of HIV infection are close to being eliminated in Amsterdam, having fallen from 201 in 2010 to nine infections in 2022. Currently, 98% of all people living with HIV have been diagnosed, 95% of those diagnosed are on antiretroviral treatment and 95% of those on treatment have achieved viral suppression. In October, the Eurosurveillance journal published an article titled, A 95% decline in estimated newly acquired HIV infections, Amsterdam, 2010 to 2022, authored by the HIV Transmission Elimination AMsterdam (H-TEAM) Initiative. Many factors contributed to the decline in HIV, but the work of the H-TEAM is an inspiring part of the picture. We spoke to Dr Godelieve de Bree, H-TEAM project leader, about what the initiative has done so far and its plans for the future.

IAS Calls for Stepping Up HIV Vaccine R&D After PrEPVacc Halts Its Vaccine Arm

Poz | 6 December 2023

PrEPVacc announced today that it “has stopped further vaccinations as there is little or no chance of the trial demonstrating vaccine efficacy in preventing HIV acquisition”. Its pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) trial is set to continue. While IAS – the International AIDS Society – is disappointed at this outcome, we believe that this provides us with lessons to drive HIV vaccine research and development (R&D) with urgency.

Meet Maya Gokul, South Africa's female condom high priestess

Daily Maverick | 6 December 2023

Maya Gokul has been teaching people in South Africa and all over the world about female condoms for more than 25 years, and has no intention of stopping. She considers her job of equipping health workers with knowledge, skills and a positive attitude about reproductive health to be a lifelong calling.

Leveraging South Africa's maturity level 3 to strengthen regulatory systems in the Africa region: What is next?

Bhekisisa | 7 December 2023

Africa continues to be a growing continent in many aspects. It is expected that the population of young Africans will constitute 42% of global youth by 2030. As the continent's population grows, the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry is also growing at an unprecedented rate, surging from \$19-billion (about R360-billion) in 2012 to a monumental \$66-billion (about R1.2-trillion) by 2022. Currently, Africa accounts for only 3% of global pharmaceutical manufacturing and about 70-80% of medicines in sub-Saharan Africa are imported. The attainment of health security including stronger health systems and the ability to protect itself in the event of pandemics is of critical importance for the continent.

“On-demand” HIV prevention method for women being tested in second early phase trial

EurekaAlert | 7 December 2023

A fast-dissolving vaginal insert that women would use at or around the time of sex as an “on-demand” HIV prevention method is being evaluated in a new early phase study being conducted by MATRIX, a United

States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded project focused on the early research and development of innovative HIV prevention products for women. The insert, which resembles a bullet-shaped tablet, contains the antiretroviral (ARV) drugs tenofovir alafenamide (TAF) and elvitegravir (EVG). Once inside the vagina, it would begin to dissolve, and in doing so, release the two drugs. Animal and laboratory studies suggest the insert would provide protection against HIV for up to three days. The MATRIX study is only the second Phase 1 trial of the TAF/EVG fast-dissolving insert used vaginally and the first to evaluate its use in multiple doses as well as in African women. The TAF/EVG fast-dissolving insert is the only on-demand HIV prevention product for use by women currently being evaluated in clinical trials.

AI can identify women with high risk of breast cancer in screening examinations

Medical Xpress | 7 December 2023

The use of AI makes it possible for women with a high risk of breast cancer to be identified in mammography screening examinations so that the cancer can be caught earlier. An international research group led from Karolinska Institutet in Sweden has now shown that the method is effective in different European countries. The study is published in *The Lancet Regional Health—Europe*. An AI-based risk model for evaluating mammographic images is able to identify women with a high risk of breast cancer who might need complementary examinations to improve the possibility of early detection. After testing the method on more than 8,500 women in Italy, Spain and Germany, the researchers can now show that the model works well in the different populations.

More than a third of women experience lasting health problems after childbirth, new research shows

WHO | 7 December 2023

Every year, at least 40 million women are likely to experience a long-term health problem caused by childbirth, according to a new study published today in *The Lancet Global Health*. Part of a special Series on maternal health, the study shows a high burden of postnatal conditions that persist in the months or even years after giving birth. These include pain during sexual intercourse (dyspareunia), affecting more than a third (35%) of postpartum women, low back pain (32%), anal incontinence (19%), urinary incontinence (8-31%), anxiety (9-24%), depression (11-17%), perineal pain (11%), fear of childbirth (tokophobia) (6-15%) and secondary infertility (11%).

The gender pain gap: Why it's time to take women's health more seriously

BBC Science Focus | 7 December 2023

A fundamental flaw exists in the healthcare system, and it's having dire consequences for women. This is the fact that pain in women is more poorly understood, and thus mistreated, compared to pain in men – due to systemic gaps and biases. It's known as the gender pain gap. And it is widening – a recent report, commissioned by Nurofen, shows that in 2023 11 per cent more women than men feel their pain has been ignored or dismissed, compared to 7 per cent in 2022.

NHI IS CLOSER TO BEING LAW, THERE ARE MANY CONCERNS NOT ADDRESSED

Health-e News | 7 December 2023

South Africa is marching closer to implementing universal health coverage in the form of the National Health Insurance (NHI) Scheme. This is after the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) voted this week in favour of the implementation of the bill. The Western Cape is the only province that voted against the implementation of NHI, while eight provinces voted in favour of the proposed health system reforms.

[WATCH] Why these three women use the anti-HIV pill and vaginal ring

Bhekisisa | 8 December 2023

Likhona Matatu, Lilitwa Lolwana and Esethu Thebe are women who want one thing: to avoid getting HIV. Fortunately they are able to access anti-HIV pills or vaginal rings from a mobile clinic for young people. It's called a Tutu truck, and visits them right where they live. The pill protected Matatu when things got

“icky” with her boyfriend, but it works best when taken every day. Something that didn't suit Lolwana, who uses a vaginal ring she only has to replace once a month. So how exactly do these prevention meds work? Our Health Beat team visited Cape Town communities with the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation to find out.

HIV May Increase the Risk of Long COVID. Why Aren't Major Advocacy Groups Addressing It?

Poz | 8 December 2023

At the beginning of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, Philip Shubin went to the emergency room when he was infected with COVID-19. At the hospital, he said he was treated like a pariah and went home expecting to die. The visit reminded him of being hospitalized in 1996 with an AIDS-related lung cancer called pulmonary Kaposi sarcoma, which led to the loss of his right lung. The arrival of antiviral medications saved him from dying of AIDS-related complications, but he lost his entire social circle during the crisis.

Analysis: Where we are with NIMART 13 years later

Spotlight | 8 December 2023

Like many countries, South Africa has a shortage of healthcare workers – particularly of doctors. One response to such shortages is task-shifting – in short, to let doctors focus on the things only they can do, and to shift some other less specialised tasks to other healthcare workers like nurses or pharmacists.

To end AIDS in Africa, UNAIDS urges governments and partners to ramp up the response to HIV

UNAIDS | 9 December 2023

Africa can end AIDS as a public threat, but to do so governments and international partners need to increase actions to reach everyone in need. Actions include accelerating treatment for children living with HIV and HIV prevention for adolescent girls, young women and key populations. Governments also need to support communities' vital leadership role in the HIV response. This was the message from UNAIDS as the 22nd International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA) drew to a close. At ICASA, thousands of delegates, including AIDS activists, grassroots communities, governments, private sector partners, key populations, doctors, scientists, donors and other international and African stakeholders came together to advance progress in the HIV response.

Inside the Three Days That Reframed Black Women's Health

New York Times | 10 December 2023

Four decades ago, nearly 2,000 Black women converged on Atlanta for a conference at Spelman College. As Dara Mathis recently reported for Headway, The New York Times's initiative covering the world's challenges through the lens of progress, this event was a milestone in the then-nascent movement. Black women were gathering en masse from across the U.S. to share with one another the experiences that affected their well-being. I spoke to some of the women who attended the event, to understand what drew them there, what they found and the impact the conference had on them. A few things stood out from our conversations.

Africa: Conflict, Crisis Show Barriers to Health for World's Poor

AllAfrica | 10 December 2023

Seventy-five years ago, in the ashes of World War Two and the unprecedented human suffering it caused, nations laid out a way to build "the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." The principle of fundamental rights of everyone, everywhere was captured in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted in 1948. The World Health Organization was founded the same year. Its Constitution enshrines health as "one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition."

COVID-19: The persistence of SARS-CoV-2 in the lungs and the role of innate immunity

Medical Xpress | 11 December 2023

One to two weeks after contracting COVID, the SARS-CoV-2 virus generally becomes undetectable in the upper respiratory tract. But does that mean that it is no longer present in the body? To find out, a team from the Institut Pasteur specialized in HIV, in collaboration with a French public research institute, the Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), conducted a study on lung cells in an animal model.

New Syphilis Content Available on HIV.gov

Poz | 11 December 2023

In light of rising cases of syphilis in the U.S. and the intersection between syphilis and HIV, HIV.gov has posted a new page on syphilis and people with HIV to our consumer-focused HIV Basics pages. Syphilis and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are hitting our nation hard. A 2023 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed that in a single year (2020-2021), reported U.S. syphilis cases increased nearly 32% for combined stages of the infection. Syphilis disproportionately impacts gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM), a population also disproportionately impacted by HIV. In 2021, 36% of cases of primary and secondary (P&S) syphilis—the most infectious stages—were among MSM.

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE CAN IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH IN AFRICA – NEW REPORT HIGHLIGHTS HOW

Health-e News | 11 December 2023

African countries can simultaneously address climate change and improve public health by reducing air pollution. In many cases these actions also have other societal, economic, environment or health benefits. Addressing these together is challenging because they are often the responsibility of different government departments. International climate change, health and development processes are often also separate discussions. However, for the first time, this year at COP28, a whole day will be devoted to discussing the linkages between climate change and health.

Health in 2023: A deceptively busy year in fewer than 1 000 words

Spotlight | 11 December 2023

2023 was a busy year for healthcare in South Africa. There were several policy developments, landmark court cases, important pieces of legislation, and some changes in leadership. Yet, take a step back and not much seems to have changed. Shortages of healthcare workers persist, corruption is still rife, budgets tight, and our health governance crisis remains as acute as ever.

How to get meds to Africa faster — and safer

Bhekisisa | 11 December 2023

The African Medicines Agency (Ama) — a medicines regulator in the making for Africa — has received over 30 applications from pharmaceutical companies for medicines to approve during its pilot phase, which will last for about a year. Ama will be based in Rwanda and will review new medicines and production facilities on behalf of African countries. South Africa's medicines regulator is coordinating the applications by offering its digital platform for manufacturers to file their documents. But South Africa won't have a say in the appointment of Ama's board or director general until it ratifies the treaty for the establishment of the agency; 27 African Union member states had ratified it by the end of November.

Africa's health systems should urgently integrate HIV and co-morbidity services for older people with HIV

Aidsmap | 11 December 2023

Non-communicable diseases are now a significant cause of mortality for people with HIV in Zimbabwe, but people with HIV are less likely to have their condition diagnosed than people in the general population and

many health facilities lack basic equipment needed for screening, the 22nd International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA 2023) heard last week in Harare, Zimbabwe.

From surviving to thriving: a framework for long-term success in people with HIV

News Medical Life Science | 11 December 2023

In recent decades, the life expectancy of people with HIV has greatly improved, leading to an evolution in their needs and priorities. Now, a new definition of long-term success (LTS) in HIV care is needed to help address the multifaceted needs of all people with HIV. NewsMedical spoke to Lisa Sterman, Global Executive Director, Global HIV Medical Affairs, Gilead Sciences, about the recently published LTS framework, recently highlighted at the opening ceremony of the 19th European AIDS Conference, which takes a person-centric approach to the HIV treatment journey.^{1,2} From reducing HIV-related stigma to better long-term integration of treatment and holistic care of comorbidities and mental health into people's lives, the LTS framework aims to shift the focus from surviving to thriving with HIV.

Tuberculosis still much more common in people with HIV in high-income settings

Aidsmap | 11 December 2023

Tuberculosis is still one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases, with 10.6 million people developing active (symptomatic) TB infection in 2022 and 1.3 million dying from it. That's second only to COVID, which killed 6.95 million people last year, and far more than the 630,000 who died due to HIV.

Vitality Health International's V-Talk session – senior execs discuss malaria

News24 | 12 December 2023

Vitality Health International launched its inaugural V-Talk panel discussion in November 2023 with the aim of addressing critical health, wellness and economic challenges facing the African continent. In the V-Talk series, leading experts are invited to identify and implement innovative healthcare solutions that protect, enhance and save lives across the African continent. The inaugural V-Talk focused on malaria and panelists included Mike Mpanya (Business Innovation Specialist at Vitality Health International), Sherwin Charles (Co-founder and CEO of Goodbye Malaria), Robbie Brozin (Co-founder of Nando's and Goodbye Malaria), Dr Ron Whelan (Deputy CEO of Discovery Health), Dr Noluthando Nematswerani (Chief Clinical Officer at Discovery Health), and the CEO of Vitality Health International Africa, Emma Knox.

Explained: Let's 'Rewind 2023' to medical breakthroughs that gave the world hope

WION | 12 December 2023

2023 was a year of medical breakthroughs. As science progresses, scientists around the world are working hard to improve the quality of human life. This year, several notable, exciting medical advancements made the headlines. From successful pig kidney transplants into humans to the world's first whole eye transplant, let's rewind to the year's most notable medical breakthroughs.

Health Minister, Ombud outraged after death of teen told by nurses to walk to police station after gang rape

Daily Maverick | 12 December 2023

Both the Health Ombudsman Professor Taole Mokoena and the Minister of Health, Dr Joe Phaahla, on Tuesday expressed their outrage at the actions of two nurses from a clinic in Motherwell in Nelson Mandela Bay. The nurses sent a raped teenager, who was in desperate need of medical attention, to walk to a police station. The girl died of an overdose of antibiotics a few hours later when she had a seizure. Her name was **Zenizole Vena**. She was only 15 years old. On the last day of her life, 22 September 2022, Zenizole was gang-raped, took an overdose of medication and then, when she sought help at the Motherwell NU 11 clinic, the nurses said she had to walk to the police station, two kilometres away. They said they were told "not to touch" rape victims.

New portable on-the-go women's health device in development

Med-Tech News | 13 December 2023

It will help identify symptoms that could help diagnose common female health conditions, like polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), and alert women if their symptoms mean they should see a doctor. The gadget will be smaller than an iPhone and will keep track of the full picture of women's health, from period symptoms to hormone fluctuations, mood, and sleep. It will capture data on a variety of fertility-related hormones, like luteinising hormone, which stimulates ovulation, and others like thyroid-stimulating hormone.

No patient left behind? How national treasury's budget cuts will affect comm serve posts

Bhekisisa | 13 December 2023

Recent cuts to South Africa's provincial budgets are making less money available to pay for health science graduates who need to do their community service. These positions are often crucial to the healthcare needs of poor and underserved communities. Graduates from the medicine, dental and rehabilitation therapy fields need to do community service in order to be fully qualified, but nearly 200 of them have not been placed by 12 December. The national health department says they are working with the provincial governments to have more positions created for graduates who don't have a spot yet for the January 2024 intake. In the meantime, medical graduates are stuck in limbo.

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TRAINING AND RESOURCES

Subscribe to the Health Systems Trust Bulletin

The Health Systems Trust (HST) produces a weekly bulletin on Fridays focusing on key public health news, peer-reviewed journal articles and other important primary healthcare resources.

Subscribe to the Health Systems Trust 60percent

HST produces a weekly online publication, 60percent, which keeps subscribers abreast with the latest news and developments pertaining to HIV-related maternal, adolescent, child and youth health. The name 60percent signifies that southern Africa is responding to a feminised HIV/AIDS epidemic, with at least 60% of those living with HIV being women. Subscribe to 60percent by simply visiting HST's website (<https://www.hst.org.za>), scroll to the bottom of the page, hit the SUBSCRIBE button, and follow the prompts. Let's keep you posted!

The Public Health Association of South Africa (PHASA) – calling all public health champions!

PHASA is a voluntary organisation of individuals passionate about population health improvements and the reduction of health inequities, and whose work focuses on the prevention of disease, the promotion of health, and the improved functioning of the country's health care system. Are you passionate about improving the health and wellbeing of communities? Do you want to expand your professional network and stay current in the field of public health? Do you want to be part of the movement to improve Public

Health? Then join the Public Health Association of South Africa today to make a difference and enhance your career!

As a member, you will:

- Gain access to cutting-edge research, resources, and best practices
- Connect with public health professionals from around the country
- Participate in educational events and conferences
- Contribute to shaping the future of public health
- Have access to mentors in the field
- Be at the forefront of advocacy initiatives.

To become a member, simply visit our [website](#) and complete the membership application. Don't miss this opportunity to advance your career and improve public health.

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PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS: South African Health Review

The editors of the 2024 *South African Health Review* (SAHR) invite the submission of abstracts that aim to address the challenges facing mental health care in South Africa, including how to **improve access to quality mental health services, and address current gaps in mental health service provision at all levels of the health service from community through primary and tertiary care levels.**

For more information kindly go to https://www.hst.org.za/media/Pages/SAHR-Call-for-Abstracts_2024.aspx/

The 2022 South African Health Review is available!

We are pleased to release the 25th edition of the South African Health Review (SAHR). Entitled 'health systems strengthening after COVID-19', the journal provides valuable insights and recommendations on how to improve the response to the pandemic and build more resilient health systems.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the world, and the health sector has been at the forefront of the response. Curated as a supplement to the 2021 edition, which addressed the response of government and the broader health sector to COVID-19, the 2022 South African Health Review provides a platform for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to share their experiences and insights on how they navigated this crisis and build more robust health systems for the future.

The journal encompasses a diverse array of subjects, including reflections on the work of the Ministerial Advisory Committee during COVID-19 and the knowledge gained and lessons learned from these processes. Additionally, it explores the ramifications of COVID-19 on maternal, women, and child health and highlights the gendered implications of the pandemic, revealing that women experienced more pronounced effects of stress, fear, and depression during the lockdown period compared to men.

Commenting on its release, CEO and co-editor of the Review Dr Themba Moeti said that "This edition of the South African Health Review offers promising examples of COVID-19 response, mitigation and recovery strategies for us to use the emerging lessons to enhance our health system resilience and better prepare for future pandemics."

Strong messages emerging from this edition emphasise that in order to effectively promote national vaccination programmes, it is imperative to equip healthcare workers (HCWs) with comprehensive, relevant, and current information. This will enable them to enhance patient communication and increase vaccine acceptance. Subsequent chapters delineate an inventive collaboration between the public and private sectors aimed at mitigating the accumulated volume of elective surgical procedures at Groote Schuur Hospital and reflect on the importance of consulting, involving and deploying community based organisations such as clinic committees in public health emergencies from the outset.

The crucial importance of inter-country collaboration is emphasised in mitigating disease transmission and impact, with authors advocating for a more coordinated approach to managing cross-border health measures.

Additionally, the Review highlights the intersection between climate change and health systems and reinforces the imperative to prioritise health within the framework of a 'just transition' and to enhance the capabilities of healthcare systems to be low-carbon and climate-resilient as crucial focal points for improving pandemic preparedness.

For more information on the journal and to access the latest edition, visit <https://www.hst.org.za/publications/Pages/SAHR2022.aspx>

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CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

International Conference on Medical & Health Science 2023

The International Conference on Medical & Health Science offers a valuable platform for researchers and practitioners to exchange knowledge and advancements in the field of Medical & Health Science.

When: 24 – 25 December 2023

Where: Fountains Hotel, Cape Town (Hybrid event)

For more information: <https://10times.com/icmhs-cape-town>

Global Summit on Liver Diseases and Therapeutics (GSLDT)

Global Summit on Liver Diseases and Therapeutics is ready to welcome scholars, researchers, students, and professionals to initiate discussion on all the topics concerning the field. You can meet influential people, share your thoughts and socialize to expand your network. This will help you gain knowledge, explore new areas, and level up your skill.

When: 3 January 2024

Where: Durban

For more information: <https://internationalconferencealerts.com/eventdetails.php?id=2126422>

ESMO Preceptorship on Breast Cancer: Cape Town 2024

Learn about breast cancer screening, diagnosis, staging, biology, and management. Understand the importance of multidisciplinary care in treating early, locally advanced, and metastatic breast cancer through surgery, radiation therapy, and systemic therapy.

When: 8 – 9 February 2024

Where: Cape Town

For more information: <https://10times.com/e1rx-36r4-9frd>

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Project Manager: Digital Health

Closing date: 27 December 2023

<https://www.hst.org.za/Pages/Project-Manager-Digital-Health-.aspx>

Registered Nurse

Closing date: 27 December 2023

<https://www.hst.org.za/Pages/Registered-Nurse.aspx>

Researchers

Closing date: 27 December 2023

<https://www.hst.org.za/Pages/Researchers-.aspx>

Sub District Co-Ordinator

Closing date: 27 December 2023

[https://www.hst.org.za/Pages/Sub-District-Co-Ordinator-\(HSS\).aspx](https://www.hst.org.za/Pages/Sub-District-Co-Ordinator-(HSS).aspx)

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