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ACADEMIC AND PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

Youth STIs: an epidemic fuelled by shame

The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health | June 2022

Editorial

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are blighting the USA. Despite pandemic restrictions and limited testing capacity leading to a reduction in recorded STIs in early 2020, rates resurged once restrictions were lifted, and 2.4 million new cases were registered by the end of the year. A new surveillance report from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), released on April 12, shows that the rates of chlamydia, gonorrhoea, and syphilis across the country have been climbing since 2013, and the majority of cases are occurring in adolescents and young people. According to the report, chlamydia is the most commonly diagnosed STI, with 1.6 million new infections (481 per 100 000 population) recorded in 2020, and the incidence remained unchanged since 2016 despite ongoing efforts to reduce the burden. Less common STIs such as gonorrhoea and syphilis are also on the rise: since 2016, rates of gonorrhoea have increased by 45%, syphilis by 52%, and congenital syphilis by 235%.

SARS-CoV-2 Infection Is Associated with Uncontrolled HIV Viral Load in Non-Hospitalized HIV-Infected Patients from Gugulethu, South Africa

MDPI | 3 June 2022

Humaira Lambarey, Melissa Blumenthal, Abeen Chetram, Wendy Joyimbana, Lauren Jennings, et al.

In South Africa, high exposure to SARS-CoV-2 occurs primarily in densely populated, low-income communities, which are additionally burdened by highly prevalent Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). With the aim to assess SARS-CoV-2 seroprevalence and its association with HIV-related clinical parameters in non-hospitalized patients likely to be highly exposed to SARS-CoV-2, this observational cross-sectional study was conducted at the Gugulethu Community Health Centre Antiretroviral clinic between October 2020 and June 2021, after the first COVID-19 wave in South Africa and during the second and beginning of the third wave. A total of 150 adult (median age 39 years [range 20–65 years]) HIV-infected patients (69% female; 31% male) were recruited. 95.3% of the cohort was on antiretroviral therapy (ART), had a median CD4 count of 220 cells/ μ L (range 17–604 cells/ μ L) and a median HIV viral load (VL) of 49 copies/mL (range 1–1,050,867 copies/mL). Furthermore, 106 patients (70.7%) were SARS-CoV-2 seropositive, and 0% were vaccinated. When stratified for HIV VL, patients with uncontrolled

HIV viremia (HIV VL > 1000 copies/mL) had significantly higher odds of SARS-CoV-2 seropositivity than patients with HIV VL < 1000 copies/mL, after adjusting for age, sex and ART status ($p = 0.035$, adjusted OR 2.961 [95% CI: 1.078–8.133]). Although the cause–effect relationship could not be determined due to the cross-sectional study design, these results point towards a higher risk of SARS-CoV-2 susceptibility among viremic HIV patients, or impaired HIV viral control due to previous co-infection with SARS-CoV-2.

Predictors and Factors Associated with Counseling Seeking Behavior Against Intimate Partner Violence Among HIV-Positive Women in Southwestern Uganda

Dovepress | 10 June 2022

A Arishaba, W Kiduuma, G Night, I Arinaitwe, V Niyonzima, et. al.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a public health concern. The World Health Organization defines IPV as “a range of any behavior that causes physical, sexual, or emotional harm to those in an intimate relationship by the current or former partner”. Furthermore, World Health Organization describes IPV as any physical violence which includes hitting, slapping, kicking or beating; sexual violence involving sexual coercion and forced sexual intercourse; psychological/ emotional abuse including belittling, insults, intimidation, humiliation and threats of harm while controlling behavior entails isolating a person from family and friends and restricting access to financial resources. Although IPV affects both genders, women are the most affected. The prevalence of cumulative lifetime IPV varies globally and has been reported to be 10–71% among married women. High prevalence rates of IPV from 20% to 71% have been reported across sub-Saharan African. According to the 2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey, four out of every ten ever-married women experienced some form of IPV during the prior year. Recent several studies have documented the existence of various forms of IPV in Uganda including physical, sexual and emotional violence.

Scaling up target regimens for tuberculosis preventive treatment in Brazil and South Africa: An analysis of costs and cost-effectiveness

PLOS Medicine | 13 June 2022

Ntwali Nsengiyumva, Jonathon Campbell, Olivia Oxlade, Juan Vesga, Christian Lienhardt, et al.

Shorter, safer, and cheaper tuberculosis (TB) preventive treatment (TPT) regimens will enhance uptake and effectiveness. WHO developed target product profiles describing minimum requirements and optimal targets for key attributes of novel TPT regimens. We performed a cost-effectiveness analysis addressing the scale-up of regimens meeting these criteria in Brazil, a setting with relatively low transmission and low HIV and rifampicin-resistant TB (RR-TB) prevalence, and South Africa, a setting with higher transmission and higher HIV and RR-TB prevalence.

Factors associated with viral suppression among adolescents on antiretroviral therapy in Free State province, South Africa

South African Journal of HIV Medicine | 10 June 2022

Balsam Elashi and Brian van Wyk

Adolescents and young people represent a growing number of people living with HIV worldwide. In 2019, there were approximately 1.5 million adolescents living with HIV (ALHIV) in sub-Saharan Africa; roughly 88% of the total global number. South Africans account for a third of all new HIV infections in southern Africa, a region regarded as the epicentre of the worldwide HIV epidemic. It is estimated that there are 720 000 HIV-infected youth aged 15–24 years in South Africa. South Africa has the largest antiretroviral therapy (ART) programme globally, with 68% of people living with HIV knowing their HIV status and enrolled on ART. Nevertheless, adolescents on ART have the highest AIDS mortality rates compared to other population groups. These high adolescent mortality rates are explained by low ART adherence and high rates of attrition at all stages of the treatment cascade. It is reported that less than half of ALHIV in South Africa are virally suppressed. The greater likelihood of detachment from health care among ALHIV may be partly explained by their unique psychological and medical needs that are unrecognised in the health system. Adolescents experience a transition stage in their development and they need to be guided, mentored and counselled to adapt to the rapid psychological, biological, physical and structural changes in their lives.

Rechallenge after anti-tuberculosis drug-induced liver injury in a high HIV prevalence cohort

South African Journal of HIV Medicine | 14 June 2022

Muhammed Moosa, Gary Maartens, Hannah Gunter, Shaazia Allie, Mohamed Chughlay, et al.

Liver injury is the most frequent complication of first-line anti-tuberculosis therapy (ATT) with an estimated incidence of 2% – 28%. Following recovery from anti-tuberculosis drug-induced liver injury (AT-DILI), rechallenge with hepatotoxic first-line anti-tuberculosis drugs (rifampicin, isoniazid and, in some circumstances, pyrazinamide) is recommended because second-line ATT regimens are less effective, longer and more toxic. While awaiting resolution of liver injury, a background ATT regimen is given, typically consisting of ethambutol and at least two other second-line anti-tuberculosis drugs. There is limited evidence on rechallenge following AT-DILI in populations with high prevalence of HIV coinfection. There is limited evidence on optimal background ATT regimens, optimal ATT rechallenge protocols, risk factors for positive rechallenge, anti-tuberculosis drugs most frequently implicated in positive rechallenge, and interruption and re-initiation of antiretroviral therapy (ART) in people living with HIV (PLHIV) who present with AT-DILI.

Women of Worth: the impact of a cash plus intervention to enhance attendance and reduce sexual health risks for young women in Cape Town, South Africa

Journal of the International AIDS Society | 14 June 2022

Tracey Naledi, Francesca Little, Carey Pike, Harley Edwards, Dante Robbertze, et al

Conditional cash transfers (CTs) augmented with other interventions are promising interventions for reducing HIV risk in adolescent girls and young women.[a](#)

Nationwide population-based incidence of cancer among patients with HIV/AIDS in South Korea

Nature (Scientific Reports) | 15 June 2022

Soon Ok Lee, Jeong Eun Lee, Shinwon Lee, Sun Hun Lee, Jin Suk Kang, et al

Since the introduction of highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART), the life expectancy of PLWHA has dramatically increased, and consequently, prolonged survival time has led to variations in the death causes. Non-AIDS-related deaths caused by chronic illnesses related to aging, such as cancer and cardiovascular disease, are increasing in most developed countries. A study conducted in Japan from 2005 to 2014 revealed that cancer is the leading cause of death, accounting for 47% of all cases among PLWHA.

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RECENT PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

Youth Month: How local organisations are protecting young women at risk of HIV

IOL | 10 June 2022

This Youth Month, community-based organisations are focusing on supporting and protecting young women in South Africa who run the greatest risk of contracting HIV. In South Africa, young women and girls aged 15-24 are the population group with the highest risk of HIV infection and gender-based violence. A local initiative, DREAMS, which stands for Determined, Resilient, Empowered, Aids-free, Mentored, and Safe, screen young women for such risk factors and puts in place measures to support them socially and medically.

Clinics gamble with HIV patients' lives

News24 | 12 June 2022

A devastated 22-year-old woman pleaded with clinics in Carletonville on the West Rand not to gamble with HIV-positive people's lives, as they were receiving half of their prescribed amount of medication. The woman said she had experienced this twice: "Last month, I went to Khutsong main clinic to collect my antiretrovirals [ARVs] and I was puzzled when the nurse handed me a container that was stuffed mostly with toilet paper. I only noticed that when I got home and, unfortunately, I didn't have taxi fare to go back to the clinic. Sadly, the pills were finished before my next visit," she said. She said that, last week, she returned the clinic and was puzzled when she again received insufficient medication.

Rahima Moosa hospital problem 'has metastasised throughout the healthcare system in South Africa'

Daily Maverick | 12 June 2022

Dr Tim de Maayer's letter and the response to it have been the topic of discussion among doctors nationwide — and the message is clear: We are tired of not being able to properly serve the people of this country because of a broken system that offers us inadequate support. Being a doctor demands incredible emotional resilience and fortitude, as you serve people at their most vulnerable of times. Being a doctor in the South African public healthcare sector often means that the emotional reserve required is amplified tenfold. Not only are you trying to serve sick people to the best of your capabilities, but you are constantly fighting multiple roadblocks completely out of your control. These present themselves in the ugliest of forms, hindering your every effort, and include lack of basic resources, environmental constraints and the cumulative burden you carry around of all the patients who suffered (or worse) when you were on duty, purely due to the lack of the former.

Study finds TB treatment during pregnancy is safe for mum and baby

Curtin University News | 13 June 2022

Seven out of 10 pregnant women were cured of their multidrug-resistant tuberculosis and delivered healthy babies after taking a medication that had previously been considered unsafe in pregnancy, a new Curtin and Telethon Kids Institute study has found. Published in JAMA Network Open, the study examined the experiences of 275 pregnant women with multidrug-resistant tuberculosis living in South Africa, Peru, Brazil, Iran and Uganda. Lead researcher Dr Kefyalew Alene, from the Curtin School of Population Health and Telethon Kids Institute, said the study had found a medication used to treat multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, Linezolid, was associated with favourable pregnancy outcomes and high treatment success. "This is the first comprehensive review of treatment outcomes for multidrug-resistant tuberculosis in pregnant women, who remain one of the most vulnerable groups among the half a million people living with the disease globally," Dr Alene said.

Groundbreaking treatment for HIV/AIDS developed by Israeli research team

The Jerusalem Post | 13 June 2022

The technology is based on a bacterial immune system against viruses, with the bacteria using the CRISPR systems as a molecular search engine, locating viral sequences and disabling them. People with AIDS might soon have the option to be treated with just a single vaccine dose, according to a new study from Tel Aviv University that shows the potential impact of a new and unique AIDS/HIV treatment. The peer-reviewed study was led by Dr. Adi Barzel and PhD student Alessio Nehmad, both from the TAU School of Neurobiology, Biochemistry and Biophysics, in collaboration with additional researchers from Israel and the United States. It appeared in Nature Biotechnology on June 9.

Why it's essential to support women's health in the workplace

The Times of India | 13 June 2022

For working women in contemporary times, the challenges of balancing work and home are as intense as ever. While domestic partnerships and parenting are becoming more equitable than they once were, working women still take on a more significant share of household and childcare responsibilities. The stress of juggling work, parenthood, and other personal commitments can easily cause or exacerbate mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, reproductive problems like irregular cycles, musculoskeletal issues like back pain and neck pain, and other health issues. Even though the percentage of women workforce in corporate India has increased significantly over the last two decades, there is still a dearth of tailored healthcare provisions in the workplace for them. Consequently, women employees have to compromise on the quality of personal and professional lives alike. Organisations need to continue to improve their support and encourage women's health needs and here's why it's high time they start to do so.

Health issues women face, and how organisations can help?

Improve women's health, gender equality to spur Africa's growth

The Standard | 14 June 2022

The Covid-19 pandemic has rolled back the gains women have made over the past decades and made it clear that the impact of crises is never gender-neutral. It is no secret that women, by virtue of being over-represented in the services sector, lower paying jobs and the informal economy, have suffered greater economic losses than men. In 2020, it was estimated that globally women lost more than 64 million jobs at a cost of US\$ 800 billion in lost earnings for those working in the formal sector. This monumental figure

does not take into account the millions of women working in the informal sector, which employs majority of women in lower-and middle-income countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, an estimated 74 per cent of women in non-agricultural jobs are in informal employment, including domestic workers, street vendors and petty goods traders.

Improved mental health for children who play well with peers by age three

The Guardian | 14 June 2022

Children who learn to play well with their peers by the age of three are likely to enjoy better mental health later in childhood, according to research from the University of Cambridge. The study is said to be the first to establish a connection between “peer play ability” before children go to school and improved mental health at the age of seven. Researchers say it is the quality – rather than quantity – of play that matters. The findings have prompted calls for children who are at risk of poor mental health to be given priority access to high-quality playgroups run by early years specialists to help protect against future mental health problems.

The inside story of Recovery: how the world’s largest COVID-19 trial transformed treatment – and what it could do for other diseases

The Conversation | 15 June 2022

Two years ago this week, the **Recovery trial** transformed the care of COVID patients with its **dexamethasone** announcement. Within four hours, the steroid was included in **NHS treatment recommendations**. Almost overnight, treatment of COVID patients around the world **changed completely**. It has been estimated that dexamethasone may have saved **a million lives** in the first nine months following the announcement.

Facebook is receiving sensitive medical information from hospital websites

StatNews | 16 June 2022

A tracking tool installed on many hospitals’ websites has been collecting patients’ sensitive health information — including details about their medical conditions, prescriptions, and doctor’s appointments — and sending it to Facebook.

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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!

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

South African Health Review 2021

Health Systems Trust | 2021

When it comes to service delivery and access in both the public and private health sectors, COVID-19 has put everything to the test. It has demonstrated how central public health security is to health and livelihoods, and how pandemic health emergencies expose the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of health systems, costing lives and causing immeasurable damage to economies. Few could have imagined the impact of COVID-19 when this pandemic reached our shores in March 2020.

This edition considers the government's and broader health sector's response to COVID-19, explores the current challenges facing the health system at this unprecedented time, and reflects on lessons learnt for future for public health emergencies. The chapters offer information on, inter alia, the challenges of balancing lives with livelihoods, and the impact of COVID-19 on different cadres of healthcare workers, especially Community Health Workers who found themselves at the forefront of our COVID-19 response. Other areas covered include the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations like children, persons with disabilities, farmworkers, migrants, and the poorest in our society.

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CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

PHASA (Public Health Association of South Africa) 17th annual public health conference

Date: 11 – 14 September

Location: Durban

Late Registration: 16 July – 26 Aug 2022

The Public Health Association of South (PHASA) invites you to attend their annual conference in Durban (eThekweni), on the east coast of South Africa. PHASA hosts an annual conferences, with the aim of engaging public health practitioners and interested people from around the country and world to share their experiences and research, discuss topical public health issues, and mentor public health students and young researchers. Hosting the national PHASA conference in Durban aims to add stimulus to the local economy, and contribute to enhanced awareness and widespread advocacy, for health, the social determinants of health, and healthcare in the region.

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING (HSS) UNIT: Area Co-ordinator

Closing Date: 2022-06-23

HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING (HSS) UNIT: Facility Team Leaders

Closing Date: 2022-06-23

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