

AFRO WEEKLY COVID-19 LITERATURE UPDATE

2021/09/25-2021/10/1st

Prepared by AFRO COVID-19 IMST through
its information management cell, together with
DAK team of the ARD's office

Issue No. 6

Due to the abundance of information and literature produced on COVID-19 in the world in general and in Africa in particular, the WHO Regional Office for Africa is publishing a weekly "Weekly COVID Literature Update" to highlight the most important literature. Each week we will select some articles per topic as well as reports and grey literature when available.

The aim is to provide an easy-to-read summary of each publication. This Bulletin is organised according to several categories of interest.

The publications shared are the result of a bibliographic research work carried out regularly on several online information sources with a major search strategy "COVID-19 AND Africa" in combination with the following keywords: **epidemiology (response activities OR hygiene practices OR social distancing OR case management), vaccination, public perceptions , other diseases and other sectors**. For this issue, the list of information sources is as follows: WHO Covid-19 database, PubMed, BioMed Central, Lancet (including sister journals), One library, African Index Medicus, Cochrane, Nature (including sister journals), Science (including sister journals), PLOS, Google scholar.

The list is subject to change and kindly note that the choice of the publications to be included in this update is subjective.

En raison de l'abondance d'informations et de littérature produites sur la COVID-19 dans le monde en général et en Afrique en particulier, le Bureau régional de l'OMS pour l'Afrique publie chaque semaine "Weekly COVID Literature Update" pour mettre en évidence la littérature la plus importante. Chaque semaine, nous sélectionnerons quelques articles par sujet ainsi que les rapports et la littérature grise quand c'est disponible.

L'objectif est de fournir un résumé facile à lire de chaque publication. Ce bulletin est organisé suivant plusieurs catégories d'intérêt.

Les publications partagées sont le résultat d'un travail de recherche bibliographique effectué régulièrement sur plusieurs sources d'information en ligne avec une comme stratégie de recherche majeure "COVID-19 ET Afrique" combinés aux mots clés suivants : **epidemiology (response activities OR hygiene practices OR social distancing OR case management), vaccination, public perceptions , other diseases and other sectors**. Pour ce numéro, la liste des sources d'information utilisées est la suivante : WHO Covid-19 database, PubMed, BioMed Central, Lancet (including sister journals), One library, African Index Medicus, Cochrane, Nature (including sister journals), Science (including sister journals), PLOS, Google scholar. Cette liste est susceptible d'être modifiée. Veuillez noter que le choix des publications à inclure dans cette mise à jour est subjectif.

Devido à abundância de informação e literatura produzida sobre a COVID-19 no mundo em geral e em África em particular, o Escritório Regional da OMS para África está a publicar semanalmente uma "Weekly COVID Literature Update" para destacar a literatura mais importante. Cada semana iremos seleccionar alguns artigos por tópico, bem como relatórios e literatura cinzenta, quando disponível.

O objectivo é fornecer um resumo de fácil leitura de cada publicação. Este boletim está organizado de acordo com várias categorias de interesse.

As publicações partilhadas são o resultado de um trabalho de pesquisa bibliográfica realizado regularmente em várias fontes de informação em linha com uma grande estratégia de pesquisa "COVID-19 E África" em combinação com as seguintes palavras-chave: **epidemiology (response activities OR hygiene practices OR social distancing OR case management), vaccination, public perceptions , other diseases and other sectors**. Para esta edição, a lista de fontes de informação é a seguinte: WHO Covid-19 database, PubMed, BioMed Central, Lancet (including sister journals), One library, African Index Medicus, Cochrane, Nature (including sister journals), Science (including sister journals), PLOS, Google scholar.

A lista está sujeita a alterações e note-se que a escolha das publicações a serem incluídas nesta actualização é subjectiva.

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A. COVID-19 EPIDEMIOLOGY/ SURVEILLANCE (trends/ distribution)

Title: A model of COVID-19 pandemic evolution in African countries

Journal: Scientific African

Publish Date: 26 September 2021

URL: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8467372/pdf/main.pdf>

Abstract:

We studied the COVID-19 pandemic evolution in selected African countries. For each country considered, we modeled simultaneously the data of the active, recovered and death cases. In this study, we used a year of data since the first cases were reported. We estimated the time-dependent basic reproduction numbers, R_0 , and the fractions of infected but unaffected populations, to offer insights into containment and vaccine strategies in African countries. We found that $R_0 \leq 4$ at the start of the pandemic but has since fallen to $R_0 \sim 1$. The unaffected fractions of the populations studied vary between 1–10% of the recovered cases.

Title: Risk assessment for COVID-19 transmission at household level in sub-Saharan Africa: evidence from DHS

Journal: Genus

Publish Date: 25 September 2021

URL:

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8475382/pdf/41118_2021_Article_130.pdf

Abstract:

Household habitat conditions matter for diseases transmission and control, especially in the case of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). These conditions include availability and adequacy of sanitation facilities, and number of persons per room. Despite this, little attention is being paid to these conditions as a pathway to understanding the transmission and prevention of COVID-19, especially in Africa, where household habitat conditions are largely suboptimal. This study assesses household sanitation and isolation capacities to understand the COVID-19 transmission risk at household level across Africa. We conducted a secondary analysis of the Demographic and Health Surveys of 16 African countries implemented between 2015 and 2018 to understand the status of households for prevention of COVID-19 transmission in home.

We assessed handwashing capacity and self-isolation capacity using multiple parameters, and identified households with elderly persons, who are most at risk of the disease. We fitted two-level random intercept logit models to explore independent relationships among the three indicators, while controlling for the selected explanatory variables. Handwashing capacity was highest in Tanzania (48.2%), and lowest in Chad (4.2%), varying by household location (urban or rural), as well as household wealth. Isolation capacity was highest in South Africa (77.4%), and lowest in Ethiopia (30.9%). Senegal had the largest proportion of households with an elderly person (42.1%), while Angola (16.4%) had the lowest. There were strong, independent relationships between handwashing and isolation capacities in a majority of countries. Also, strong associations were found between isolation capacity and presence of older persons in households. Household capacity for COVID-19 prevention varied significantly across countries, with those having elderly household members not necessarily having the best handwashing or isolation capacity. In view of the age risk factors of COVID-19 transmission, and its dependence on handwashing and isolation capacities of households, each country needs to use the extant information on its risk status to shape communication and intervention strategies that will help limit the impact of the disease in its population across Africa.

Title: Predictive models for COVID-19 cases, deaths and recoveries in Algeria

Journal: Results in Physics

Publish Date: September 2021

URL: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8478079/pdf/main.pdf>

Abstract:

This study was conducted to predict the number of COVID-19 cases, deaths and recoveries using reported data by the Algerian Ministry of health from February 25, 2020 to January 10, 2021. Four models were compared including Gompertz model, logistic model, Bertalanffy model and inverse artificial neural network (ANNi). Results showed that all the models showed a good fit between the predicted and the real data ($R^2 > 0.97$). In this study, we demonstrate that obtaining a good fit of real data is not directly related to a good prediction efficiency with future data. In predicting cases, the logistic model obtained the best precision with an error of 0.92% compared to the rest of the models studied. In deaths, the Gompertz model stood out with a minimum error of 1.14%. Finally, the ANNi model reached an error of 1.16% in the prediction of recovered cases in Algeria.

Title: COVID-19: Mechanistic Model of the African Paradox Supports the Central Role of the NF- κ B Pathway

Journal: MDPI

Publish Date: September 2021

URL: <https://www.mdpi.com/1999-4915/13/9/1887/pdf>

Abstract:

The novel severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) has expanded into a global pandemic, with more than 220 million affected persons and almost 4.6 million deaths by 8 September 2021. In particular, Europe and the Americas have been heavily affected by high infection and death rates. In contrast, much lower infection rates and mortality have been reported generally in Africa, particularly in the sub-Saharan region (with the exception of the Southern Africa region). There are different hypotheses for this African paradox, including less testing, the young age of the population, genetic disposition, and behavioral and epidemiological factors. In the present review, we address different immunological factors and their correlation with genetic factors, pre-existing immune status, and differences in cytokine induction patterns. We also focus on epidemiological factors, such as specific medication coverage, helminth distribution, and malaria endemics in the sub-Saharan region. An analysis combining different factors is presented that highlights the central role of the NF- κ B signaling pathway in the African paradox. Importantly, insights into the interplay of different factors with the underlying immune pathological mechanisms for COVID-19 can provide a better understanding of the disease and the development of new targets for more efficient treatment strategies.

B. COVID-19 RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

(hygiene practices, social distancing, case management)

Title: COVID-19 underscores the important role of Clinical Ethics Committees in Africa

Journal: BMC Medical Ethics

Publish Date: 25 September 2021

URL: [10.1186/s12910-021-00696-2](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12910-021-00696-2)

Abstract:

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified pre-existing challenges in healthcare in Africa. Long-standing health inequities, embedded in the continent over centuries, have been laid bare and have raised complex ethical dilemmas. While there are very few clinical ethics committees (CECs) in Africa,

the demand for such services exists and has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. The views of African healthcare professionals or bioethicists on the role of CECs in Africa have not been explored or documented previously. In this study, we aim to explore such perspectives, as well as the challenges preventing the establishment of CECs in Africa.

Methods: Twenty healthcare professionals and bioethicists from Africa participated in this qualitative study that utilized in-depth semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. Themes were identified through thematic analysis of interviews and open-ended responses.

Results: Kenya and South Africa are the only countries on the continent with formal established CECs. The following themes emerged from this qualitative study: (1) Lack of formal CECs and resolution of ethical dilemmas; (2) Role of CECs during COVID-19; (3) Ethical dilemmas presented to CECs pre-COVID-19; (4) Lack of awareness of CECs; (5) Lack of qualified bioethicists or clinical ethicists; (6) Limited resources to establish CECs; (7) Creating interest in CECs and networking.

Conclusions: This study illustrates the importance of clinical ethics education among African HCPs and bioethicists, more so now when COVID-19 has posed a host of clinical and ethical challenges to public and private healthcare systems. The challenges and barriers identified will inform the establishment of CECs or clinical ethics consultation services (CESs) in the region. The study results have triggered an idea for the creation of a network of African CECs.

Title: Regional differences in NPI efficacy and recommendations for Africa

Journal: International Journal of Infectious Diseases

Publish Date: September 2021

URL: <https://www.ijidonline.com/action/showPdf?pii=S1201-9712%2821%2900753-0>

Abstract:

Non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) remain a key component of COVID response, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) where vaccination is limited (Padma 2021). Much of what we know about NPI efficacy, however, comes from HIC contexts, and this knowledge is not necessarily transferrable to LMICs (Chowdhury et al. 2020). It is well-established that lockdowns have had detrimental effects in LMICs, including increased food insecurity and diminished healthcare access (Amare et al. 2021; Harling et al. 2021). Targeting NPI packages to regional contexts can potentially maximize efficacy while reducing secondary costs.

Title: After the West's response to Covid, Africa cannot expect support on climate change

Source: African Business

Publish Date: September 2021

URL: [After the West's response to Covid, Africa cannot expect support on climate change - African Business](#)

Abstract:

Western nations have not acted in good faith when it comes to the supply of vaccines. Why should African nations think they will act differently when it comes to climate negotiations?

Title: Opinion: How health workers are leading Africa's COVID-19 response

Source: Devex

Publish Date: September 2021

URL: [Opinion: How health workers are leading Africa's COVID-19 response | Devex](#)

Abstract:

Over a year and a half ago, [COVID-19](#) shook health systems globally. In Africa, where there are only [5 health workers for every 10,000 people](#), the impact was especially profound. As delegations get together during the United Nations General Assembly, we are calling on global leaders to prioritize investments in strong community health services that can help end the COVID-19 pandemic and achieve the vision of health care for all.

Title: Opinion: For COVID-19 recovery, African countries need stronger data

Source: Devex

Publish Date: September 2021

URL: [Opinion: For COVID-19 recovery, African countries need stronger data | Devex](#)

Abstract:

As a third wave of [COVID-19](#) infections sweeps across Africa, the full impact of the pandemic on serious illness and mortality remains to be seen. In economic terms, the picture is already much starker. Getting the continent back on to a sustainable and inclusive path will require a host of measures, ranging from fostering digitalization to extending social protection measures.

Title: Coping strategies used by nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic: A narrative literature review

Journal: Health SA Gesondheid

Publish Date: 28 September 2021

URL: <https://hsag.co.za/index.php/hsag/article/view/1652/pdf>

Abstract:

Background: During the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, it is understandable that nurses are working under stressful conditions. A successful use of effective coping strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic will help nurses to manage stressful conditions.

Aim: The objective of this narrative literature review was to explore and describe the coping strategies used by nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Setting: This study was conducted from all available literature related to the coping strategies used by nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic globally.

Methods: A narrative literature review was conducted to answer researchers' concern of coping strategies used by nurses during COVID-19. The purposive sampling technique was used to select three online databases that were used to search for the relevant literature, namely Google Scholar, Science Direct and African Journals (formerly SAePublications). Search terms used to conduct this study include coping, coping strategies, nurses, nursing and COVID-19 pandemic. This study included English studies focusing on coping strategies used by nurses during COVID-19 published between 2019 and 2021. The study excluded newspaper articles, conference reports and other databases not mentioned in this study.

Results: The findings identified the following strategies: use of COVID-19 protective measures, avoidance strategy, social support, faith-based practices, psychological support and management support are used by nurses as coping strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion: The use of the identified coping strategies by nurses may reduce stress and burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recommendations were made for future research, nursing education and practice.

Contribution: This is the first narrative literature review focusing on the coping strategies used by nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this narrative literature review provide insight that may be used by nurses of all categories to cope during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Title: L'état de préparation aux soins de santé » a été une mesure trompeuse de la résilience au COVID-19

Journal: Nature

Publish Date: 24 September 2021

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1038/d44148-021-00085-2>

Abstract:

Une nouvelle étude a identifié les facteurs prédictifs de l'apparition du premier cas et du taux de mortalité dans la Région africaine de l'OMS au cours des première et deuxième vagues de la pandémie de COVID-19.

Title: Regional differences in NPI efficacy and recommendations for Africa

Journal: International Journal of Infectious Diseases

Publish Date: September 2021

URL: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8455350/pdf/main.pdf>

Abstract:

Non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) remain a key component of COVID response, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) where vaccination is limited (Padma 2021). Much of what we know about NPI efficacy, however, comes from HIC contexts, and this knowledge is not necessarily transferrable to LMICs (Chowdhury et al. 2020). It is well-established that lockdowns have had detrimental effects in LMICs, including increased food insecurity and diminished healthcare access (Amare et al. 2021; Harling et al. 2021). Targeting NPI packages to regional contexts can potentially maximize efficacy while reducing secondary costs.

Title: Local characterization of the COVID-19 response: the case of a lockdown in Lusaka, Zambia

Journal: Global Health Research and Policy

Publish Date: 30 September 2021

URL: <https://ghrp.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s41256-021-00220-4.pdf>

Abstract:

Background

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has sparked heated debate among scholars on the relevance of lockdowns. There are those in favor of the lockdown and others who are critical of it. However, despite the increased interest in understanding the relevance of lockdowns, there still has not been much focus on its relevance in countries like Zambia. Thus, with the help of the Social Representation Theory (SRT), we set out to explore and document the local characterization of the lockdown by residents of Lusaka, Zambia.

Methods

We recruited our participants through convenient and purposive sampling techniques. This was done through the use of the ZAMTEL public phone records. Initial contact was made to potential participants, and they were asked of their availability and willingness to participate in the interview. Upon agreeing to participate, they were included in the sample. A total of 68 people were

selected to take part in this study. Their age ranged from 20 to 76 years old. 33 of them were male and 35 females. After this, we conducted interviews with the 68 participants. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, our interviews were conducted via telephone in conformity with the recommendations from the IRB in Lusaka and the advice of the ministry of health. We anonymized the demographic characteristics and responses from our participants. Later, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

Results

The lockdown was on one hand lauded for slowing down the incidence rates, preventing fatalities, and protecting the healthcare system from collapse. On the other hand, it was criticized for exacerbating poverty levels, unemployment rates, increasing the rate of mental health problems, aiding gender-based violence, and intensifying political repression and corruption. The results speak to the complexity in the characterization of the lockdown as a response to COVID-19 in Lusaka, Zambia. This observation demonstrates the folly of viewing, applying and characterizing the COVID-19 lockdown as a 'one-size-fits-all' approach in Lusaka, Zambia.

Conclusion

Rather than establishing the lockdown as an incontestable good, as it is depicted by some scholars or as useless by its critics, our findings instead demonstrate the diversity and complexity in how it is locally viewed by Lusaka residents. The study provides grounds for caution on simplistic and binary characterization of lockdowns. It indicates the need for careful dialog between the designers of lockdowns and citizens in order to tailor such interventions to local realities in context-specific ways. It also shows that though the development of such interventions, all the various and complex elements it embodies must be taken into account in order to realize optimum outcomes.

C. COVID-19 VACCINATION

Title: Billions Committed, Millions Delivered The mixed record of vaccine diplomacy and donations

Source: Think Global Health

Publish Date: September 2021

URL: [Billions Committed, Millions Delivered | Think Global Health](#)

Title: Equal access of COVID-19 vaccine distribution in Africa: Challenges and way forward

Journal: Journal of Medical Virology

Publish Date: September 2021

URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/jmv.27095>

Abstract:

The World Health Organization (WHO) in Africa and Africa Center Disease Control (Africa CDC) urge the international community and different countries in Africa to ensure sustainable and concrete action to ensure equal and easy access to the COVID-19 vaccines, as different countries in Africa are still struggling to develop a safe and effective strategy to ensure equal vaccine distribution, if available. Africa CDC has called on the international community to come together to help Africa with COVID-19 vaccines to make equal the vaccine distribution among African countries as many cannot afford the vaccine costs due to the level of poverty and other negative factors. The African Union has endorsed the need for Africa to develop a framework to actively engage in easy accessibility to COVID-19 vaccines, which will allow different countries in Africa to take easy steps that will strengthen the local vaccine distribution system, building workforce skills and knowledge, and enrich outreach services in Africa. The article discusses the need for equal access in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in Africa, the challenges, and the necessary recommendations that can help to mitigate these challenges.

Title: The World of Immunization: Achievements, Challenges, and Strategic Vision for the Next Decade

Journal: Journal of Infectious Disease

Publish Date: 30 September 2021

URL: https://academic.oup.com/jid/article-pdf/224/Supplement_4/S452/40481471/jiab284.pdf

Abstract:

Immunization is among the most cost-effective public health interventions available and is estimated to have averted at least 37 million deaths between 2000 and 2019. Since the establishment of the Expanded Programme on Immunization in 1974, global vaccination coverage increased and the coverage gap between rich and poor countries decreased. Creation of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, in 2000 allowed the poorest countries in the world to benefit from new, life-saving vaccines and expand the breadth of protection against an increasing number of vaccine-preventable diseases. Despite this progress, inequities in access to and uptake of vaccines persist. Opportunities to realize the full potential of vaccines are within reach but require focused, tailored and committed action by Governments and immunization stakeholders. The Immunization Agenda 2030 provides a framework for action

during the next decade to attain a world where everyone, everywhere, at every age fully benefits from vaccines for good health and well-being.

D. COVID-19 PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS AND EFFECTS

Title: Community risk perception and barriers for the practice of COVID-19 prevention measures in Northwest Ethiopia: A qualitative study

Journal: PLoS One

Publish date: September 24, 2021

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0257897>

Abstract:

Background

According to the World Health Organization, viral diseases continue to emerge and represent a serious issue for public health. The elderly and those with underlying chronic diseases are more likely to become severe cases. Our study sets out to present in-depth exploration and analyses of the community's risk perception and barriers to the practice of COVID-19 prevention measures in South Gondar Zone, Northwest Ethiopia.

Methods

A qualitative study was done in three districts of South Gondar Zone. Community key informants and health extension workers were selected purposely for in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. The interviews were conducted by maintaining WHO recommendations for social distancing and use of appropriate personal protective equipment. The sample size for the study depended on the theoretical saturation of the data at the time of data collection. The qualitative data generated from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions was transcribed verbatim and translated into English language and thematically analyzed using open code software version 4.02.

Results

Three main themes and five categories emerged from the narrations of the participants regarding the perceived barriers for the practice of COVID-19 prevention measures. A total of 9 community key informants (5 women development armies (HDA), 2 health extension workers (HEW), and 2 religious leaders participated in the in-depth interview, while two focus group discussions (7 participants in each round) were conducted among purposely selected community members. The age of the participants ranged from 24 to 70 years with the median age of 48 years. The major identified barriers for practicing COVID-19 prevention measures were the presence of strong cultural

and religious practices, perceiving that the disease does not affect the young, misinformation about the disease, and lack of trust in the prevention measures.

Conclusions

Socio-cultural, religious, and economic related barriers were identified from the participant's narratives for the practice of COVID-19 prevention measures in south Gondar Zone. Our findings suggest the need to strengthen community awareness and education programs about the prevention measures of COVID-19 and increase diagnostic facilities with strong community-based surveillance to control the transmission of the pandemic.

Title: Genetic counseling experiences at the University of Cape Town during COVID-19

Journal: Journal of Genetic Counseling

Publish Date: 28 September 2021

URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/jgc4.1520>

Abstract:

Soon after the first COVID-19 case was reported in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, South Africa announced a national lockdown in an attempt to curb the spread of the disease. Under national lockdown, businesses were closed, learning institutions moved to emergency remote teaching (ERT), and hospitals reduced their patient loads. De-escalation of clinical services at Groote Schuur and Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospitals affected Genetic Counseling Services and resulted in a decrease in in-person and an increase in telecounseling sessions. ERT, offered by the University of Cape Town, affected the teaching of Genetic Counseling students, and other methods of training had to be found to compensate for the lack of patient contact. In this paper, we present our Genetic Counseling team's experiences of learning and clinical services during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. The team met online as a group in November 2020 to discuss their experiences. The discussion was recorded and transcribed, and topics that arose during the discussion were identified. The pandemic and the accompanying lock down, which forced trainees to move back home, resulted in great uncertainty. The trainees found ERT on an online platform, including simulated cases, very helpful, but they lost the confidence to work with real patients. Telecounseling became the predominant form of service delivery and was experienced as positive when video sessions were possible. The telephone service for advanced maternal age counseling was problematic due to unreliable networks. The biggest loss for the GCs was the feeling of disconnection from peers, supervisors, and patients. The experiences highlighted positive and negative aspects as well as specific challenges faced

in South Africa. Lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic will be used in future to improve training of GCs and to enhance service delivery.

E. COVID-19 EFFECTS ON OTHER DISEASES AND SECTORS

Title: How Coronavirus Disease 2019 Changed Dermatology Practice in 1 Year Around the World: Perspectives from 11 Countries

Journal: Dermatologic Clinics

Publish Date: October 2021

URL: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8452267/pdf/main.pdf>

Abstract:

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) brought the world to its knees. As each nation grappled with launching an effective response while simultaneously minimizing repercussions on health care systems, economies, and societies, the medical and scientific landscape shifted forever. In particular, COVID-19 has challenged and transformed the field of dermatology and the way we practice. In this article, dermatologists from 11 countries share insights gained from local experience. These global perspectives will help provide a better framework for delivering quality dermatologic care and understanding how the field has evolved during this medical crisis.

Title: Mitigating the COVID-19 challenges to HIV prevention efforts in Africa: A socio-behavioral perspective

Journal: Global Public Health

Publish Date: 23 September 2021

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2021.1980601>

Abstract:

In this commentary, the authors highlight how the COVID-19 pandemic has a range of negative effects on HIV prevention in Africa, both well documented HIV service interruptions and less well appreciated effects of the socio-structural context that put people at risk of HIV (e.g. loss of earnings, stigma). The authors call on the global community to unpack and address these factors as the pandemic surges in Africa. They point to best practices and tools from decades of socio-behavioural research and programming responses in the HIV field that can be applied to COVID-19 efforts, including for vaccines being rolled out.

Title: Measles crisis in Africa amidst the COVID-19 pandemic: Delayed measles vaccine administration may cause a measles outbreak in Africa.

Journal: Journal of Medical Virology

Publish Date: October 2021

URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/jmv.27150>

Abstract:

Title: Altered smell and taste: Anosmia, parosmia and the impact of long Covid-19

Journal: PLOS ONE

Publish date: 24 September 2021

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0256998>

Abstract:

Background

Qualitative olfactory (smell) dysfunctions are a common side effect of post-viral illness and known to impact quality of life and health status. Evidence is emerging that taste and smell loss are common symptoms of Covid-19 that may emerge and persist long after initial infection. The aim of the present study was to document the impact of post Covid-19 alterations to taste and smell.

Methods

We conducted exploratory thematic analysis of user-generated text from 9000 users of the AbScent Covid-19 Smell and Taste Loss moderated Facebook support group from March 24 to 30th September 2020.

Results

Participants reported difficulty explaining and managing an altered sense of taste and smell; a lack of interpersonal and professional explanation or support; altered eating; appetite loss, weight change; loss of pleasure in food, eating and social engagement; altered intimacy and an altered relationship to self and others.

Conclusions

Our findings suggest altered taste and smell with Covid-19 may lead to severe disruption to daily living that impacts on psychological well-being, physical health, relationships and sense of self. More specifically, participants reported impacts that related to reduced desire and ability to eat and prepare food; weight gain, weight loss and nutritional insufficiency; emotional wellbeing; professional practice; intimacy and social bonding; and the disruption of people's sense of reality and themselves. Our findings should inform further research and suggest areas for the training, assessment and treatment practices of health care professionals working with long Covid.

Title: Implementation of mass drug administration for neglected tropical diseases in Guinea during the COVID-19 pandemic

Journal: Plos Neglected Tropical Diseases

Publish Date: 27 September 2021

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pntd.0009807>

Abstract:

Background

Guinea reported its first case of COVID-19 on March 12, 2020. Soon thereafter, a national state of emergency was declared, all land borders were closed, schools were shut down, and public gatherings were limited. Many health activities, including field-based activities targeting neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), were paused. The World Health Organization (WHO) issued updated guidance on the resumption of NTD field-based activities on July 27, 2020. In response, the Guinea Ministry of Health (MoH) and its partners planned and resumed mass drug administration (MDA) in mid-August to September 2020 in 19 health districts.

Methodology/principal findings

A risk-benefit assessment was conducted to identify potential risks associated with the MDA in the COVID-19 context. Following this assessment, a risk mitigation plan with barrier measures was developed to guide MDA implementation. These measures included COVID-19 testing for all national staff leaving Conakry, mask wearing, social distancing of two meters, and hand washing/sanitizing. A checklist was developed and used to monitor compliance to risk mitigation measures. Data on adherence to risk mitigation measures were collected electronically during the MDA. A total of 120 checklists, representing 120 community drug distributor (CDD) teams (two CDDs per team) and 120 households, were completed. Results indicated that washing or disinfecting hands was practiced by 68.3% of CDD teams, compared to 45.0% among households. Face masks to cover the mouth and nose were worn by 79.2% of CDD teams, while this was low among households (23.3%). In 87.5% of households, participants did not touch the dose pole and in 88.3% of CDD teams, CDDs did not touch the hands of the participants while giving the drugs. A large majority of CDD teams (94.2%) and household members (94.2%) were willing to participate in the MDA despite the pandemic. The epidemiological coverage was $\geq 65\%$ for lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis and soil-transmitted helminths in 10 out of 19 HDs and $\geq 75\%$ for schistosomiasis for school-aged children in 7 out of 11 HDs.

Conclusions/significance

Guinea was one of the first countries in Africa to resume MDA activities during the COVID-19 pandemic without causing an observed increase of

transmission. The development of a risk mitigation plan and a method to monitor adherence to barrier measures was critical to this unprecedented effort. The rapid incorporation of COVID-19 barrier measures and their acceptance by CDDs and household members demonstrated both the adaptability of the National NTD Program to respond to emerging issues and the commitment of the MoH to implement NTD programs.

Title: Ghana's rice value chain resilience in the context of COVID-19.

Journal: Social Sciences & Humanities Open

Publish Date: 27 September 2021

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2021.100210>

Abstract:

The 2020 State of the Food Security and Nutrition World report suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic may render 83 to 132 million people food insecure. The global south has been projected to be adversely affected by COVID-19 in terms of food and nutritional security. This potentially renders Africa off track in achieving SDG -2 of zero hunger by 2030. Ghana is a net importer of rice and how the sector responded to the global pandemic has received less traction in the agri-food system literature. There is skewed literature that concentrates on the global north. The paper employed a qualitative approach involving key informant interviews across 6 regions in Ghana. The study covered 48 Agricultural Extension Agents (AEAs) and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) officers, 80 farmers, and 48 market leaders. We use one of the country's main food staple - rice to show the food (in)-security situation during the pandemic. We articulate that the use of the right food security conceptual and theoretical framing remains imperative in understanding food (in)-security. The findings showed price hikes during the imposition of lockdown affected access (physical and effective demand). Rice however remained available during and after the lockdown imposition. Ghana's rice production output was affected during the COVID-19. The ramification of COVID-19 on Ghana's rice sector was not dire but points to the vulnerability of the rice value chain to future pandemics. Important policy actions are needed to consolidate particular gains made in Ghana's planting for food and jobs to minimize rice imports.

Title: COVID-19 and the economy in Africa

Source: The World Bank

Publish Date: September 2021

URL: <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/publications/kiel-policy-briefs/2021/covid-19-in-africa-and-its-impact-on-the-economy-16619/>

Abstract:

The corona pandemic has also hit Africa. However, the officially recorded numbers of infections and deaths are comparatively low. In Africa, with 7.5 million only 3.5% of all COVID-19 cases and with almost 200,000 4.3% of all corona-related deaths worldwide, although the continent makes up almost 18% of the world's population.

Title: The impact of COVID-19 on an employee assistance programme in a multinational insurance organisation: Considerations for the future

Journal: SA Journal of Industrial Psychology

Publish Date: 27 September 2021

URL: <https://sajip.co.za/index.php/sajip/article/download/1863/3338>

Abstract:

Orientation: The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has led to an increased focus on the effectiveness of employee assistance programmes (EAPs).

Research purpose: To evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on the value, utilisation and scope of an EAP within the South African insurance sector.

Motivation for the study: Higher levels of stress and anxiety experienced by employees because of COVID-19 has necessitated the need to better understand the reasons for EAPs utilisation and its effectiveness within organisations.

Research approach/design and method: The study provided an overview of employee well-being and an overview of the origins and evolution of EAPs. The study utilised thematic analysis to analyse 1002 cases with a sample of $n = 907$, pre-and post-onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Main findings: The utilisation of EAPs increased because of COVID-19, yet the reasons for accessing these programmes remained largely consistent before and during COVID-19. At a sub-theme level, the priority of themes differed across the time periods influenced by external context and circumstance.

Practical/managerial implications: The study found a need to clearly define employee well-being and reposition the role of EAPs within the organisation. Organisations need to broaden the scope of EAPs and through continuous education and awareness create an environment where employees feel like they can safely access these services.

Contribution/value-add: The study contributes towards the current literature on employee well-being and providing a perspective on the relevance, value and utilisation of EAPs before and during a pandemic.

Title: Mental health experiences of healthcare professionals during COVID-19

Journal: SA Journal of Industrial Psychology

Publish Date: 28 September 2021

<https://sajip.co.za/index.php/sajip/article/view/1865>

Abstract

Orientation: The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic led to fundamental changes in the workplace for many, particularly healthcare workers.

Research purpose: This study explored healthcare workers' (ophthalmologists, nurses and support staff) experiences of anxiety, depression, burnout, resilience and coping strategies during lockdown Levels 2 and 3 in an Ophthalmic consulting practice and hospital in South Africa.

Motivation for the study: The increased workplace stress and vulnerability associated with working during the COVID-19 pandemic introduced an unprecedented level of risk for healthcare workers. Factors contributing to psychological distress must be identified and appropriately mitigated, to prevent dire human and economic costs.

Research approach/design and method: A survey was sent out at two separate times to a convenience sample of 31 and 15 healthcare workers respectively. The survey consisted of a demographics section, Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale, Burnout Measure short-version, Brief Cope Inventory, Connor Davidson Resilience Inventory and six open-ended questions investigating personal health and support experiences during COVID-19. Descriptive analyses and thematic analysis were used for data analysis.

Main findings: The sample of healthcare workers experienced some degree of psychological distress, including anxiety, burnout and a lack of social support on both surveys. However, these symptoms were alleviated by personal factors, including positive coping mechanisms, high resilience and organisational support.

Practical/managerial implications: Healthcare facilities should consider in-house structures focusing on building resilience and positive coping mechanisms, whilst ensuring that workplace conditions are optimal for staff members.

Contribution/value-add: This study provides some insight into both the risk and protective factors experienced by health workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Title: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on accessing HIV care: A case report

Journal: South African Family Practice

Publish date: 27 September 2021

URL: <https://safpj.co.za/index.php/safpj/article/view/5344>

Abstract

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has had an enormous impact on the provision of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) services amongst people living with HIV. Many people have adopted different health-seeking behaviour in alignment with the lockdown provisions during the COVID-19 pandemic. These lockdown regulations have had a huge impact on healthcare access for people on chronic medication. The disruption of antiretroviral therapy (ART) has a profound effect on HIV-associated morbidity and mortality. The impact on HIV programmes as a result of the interruption in ART could be bigger than the HIV pandemic alone.

Title: Investigating the prevention and mitigatory role of risk communication in the COVID-19 pandemic: A case study of Bloemfontein, South Africa

Journal: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies

Publish date: 27 September 2021

URL: <https://jamba.org.za/index.php/jamba/article/download/1130/2063>

Abstract:

The South African disaster response activities surpass risk reduction since the implementation of the *Disaster Management Act 57* of 2002 (DMA) and the *National Disaster Management Framework* of 2005 (NDMF). Risk reduction, in particular risk communication, remained unexploited until the occurrence of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The legislation and policy mandate a proactive approach for disaster management, requiring a focus on disaster risk reduction. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the significance of risk communication as a critical prevention and mitigatory strategy in disaster risk management, focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic. Key to risk communication success is ensuring adequate comprehension, accurate perception of the disseminated information, and compliance with regulations. Questions of trustworthiness, acceptability, effectiveness, and usefulness of messages and strategies communicated sought answers from the Bloemfontein population. Furthermore, the Agenda-setting Theory provided the grounding for the study. The study sample was picked in a stratified random sampling manner, using the confidence level and margin of error equation. A questionnaire survey was used to collect the data required to achieve the research objectives. Risk communication as a disaster risk reduction strategy implemented concurrently with imposed regulations was found to have played a vital role in mitigating the virus spread. However, the respondents were not aware of the local disaster.

Title: Increased Depression during COVID-19 Lockdown Associated with Food Insecurity and Antiretroviral Non-Adherence among People Living with HIV in Uganda

Journal: AIDS and Behavior

Publish Date: 25 September 2021

URL:

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8475428/pdf/10461_2021_Article_3371.pdf

Abstract:

The health and economic threats posed by the COVID-19 pandemic can be sources of great distress among people living with HIV, which in turn can impact the management of their HIV disease. We examined change in depression from pre- to post-lockdown restrictions and correlates of elevated depressive symptoms, including antiretroviral therapy (ART) adherence. Participants enrolled in a randomized controlled trial of an ART adherence intervention in Uganda. The month-12 follow-up assessment was fully administered just prior to the start of the pandemic-related lockdown in March 2020; at the conclusion of the lockdown three months later, we administered a mixed-methods phone-based assessment. ART adherence was electronically monitored throughout the study period, including during and after the lockdown. Depression was assessed with the 8-item Patient health questionnaire (PHQ-8), on which scores >9 signify a positive screen for elevated depressive symptoms. A sample of 280 participants completed both the month-12 and post-lockdown assessments. Rates of elevated depressive symptoms nearly tripled from month 12 ($n = 17$, 6.1%) to the post-lockdown assessment ($n = 50$, 17.9%; McNemar test $< .001$). Elevated depressive symptoms at post-lockdown were associated with being female, indicators of economic struggles at month 12 (unemployment, low income, high food insecurity), and lower ART adherence during the 3-month lockdown period [mean of 71.9% (SD = 27.9) vs. 80.8% (SD = 24.1) among those not depressed; $p = .041$] in bivariate analysis. In multiple regression analysis, higher food insecurity [adj. OR (95% CI) = 4.64 (2.16–9.96)] and perception that the pandemic negatively impacted ART adherence [adj. OR (95% CI) = 1.96 (1.22–3.16)] remained associated with a greater likelihood of elevated depressive symptoms, when other correlates were controlled for. Qualitative data suggested that economic stressors (lack of food, work, and money) were key contributors to elevated depressive symptoms, and these stressors led to missed ART doses because of lack of food and stress induced forgetfulness. Elevated depressive symptoms significantly increased during the COVID-19 lockdown and was associated with food insecurity and reduced

ART adherence. Mechanisms for identifying and treating depression and food insecurity are needed to help PLHIV cope with and mitigate the harmful effects of unexpected crises that may impede disease management and access to food.

Title: Impact of COVID-19 on psychological distress among SME owners in Ghana: Partial least square–structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach

Journal: Journal of Community Psychology

Publish Date: 28 September 2021

URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/jcop.22716>

Abstract:

A critical part of the national economy is small and medium enterprises (SMEs). SME owners are vital contributors to the overall economy. Due to their limited capital and assets, they are more vulnerable. In comparison to their contribution, the value of assessing SME owner's depression, anxiety, and mental stress has been very minimal during the COVID-19 outbreak. Firms were forced to close due to lockdown, and they faced substantial business losses. Thus, this study aims to investigate SME owners' psychological distress due to business losses during this pandemic. The study used psychological parameters: Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21) to examine SME owners' psychological distress. A total number of 217 owners were surveyed through a judgmental sampling technique using a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed employing partial least square-based structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings showed that DASS-21 parameters and fear of business loss affected psychological distress. Besides, fear of business loss increases psychological distress, whereas government support lessens the distress. Theoretically, this study extended the scope of DASS-21 scale and contributed to the literature of psychology. In terms of policy implications, this study provides useful information for government, policymakers, and SME owners about the effects mentioned above.

Title: Bird flu outbreak amidst COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa: Efforts and challenges at hand.

Journal: Journal of Medical Virology

Publish Date: October 2021

URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/jmv.27124>

Abstract:

Over the months of April and May 2021, South Africa has witnessed several outbreaks of highly infective avian influenza (H5N1) in different poultry farms. This came as a shock to a country that was already battling with the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. The emergence of the virus has spurred import bans and massive culls in the poultry business. Local experts have also called for a restriction on the movement of people and cars in and out of their chicken farms. Employees have also been encouraged to shower in the mornings when they arrive at the farms and wear fresh clothes, as the flu spreads very quickly. In a country that is already facing the economic implications of the COVID-19, this has the potential to cause a significant dent in the economy, as well as severely impact people's day-to-day life. Bird flu-also called avian influenza-is a viral infection that can infect not only birds but also humans and other animals. The threat of a new influenza pandemic has prompted countries to draft national strategic preparedness plans to prevent, contain and mitigate the next human influenza pandemic. This paper describes the South African burden, current efforts, and preparedness against the avian influenza virus.

Title: WHO guidance to support HIV care models during the Covid-19 era

Journal: Clinical Infectious Diseases

Publish Date: 25 September 2021

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciab855>