

COVID-19 and HIV: Weekly Digest

3 July 2020

The Children and AIDS Learning Collaborative's COVID-19 and HIV digest compiles recent knowledge and updates related to the COVID-19 pandemic of interest to those working on HIV among children, adolescents, and pregnant women. The selections below represent views of the authors and do not reflect UNICEF positions.

COVID-19: IMPACT ON HIV AND HIV SERVICE DELIVERY

<p>Learning from People with HIV: Their Insights are Critical to Our Response to the Intersecting COVID-19 and HIV Pandemics in Africa 30 June 2020, <i>AIDS and Behavior</i></p> <p>In this field report from East Africa, people living with HIV and HIV care providers note the impacts of COVID-19 and innovative solutions that are being used to continue HIV care.</p>	<p>Delivery of PrEP at Home in the Republic of Moldova 30 June 2020, <i>UNAIDS</i></p> <p>In Moldova, the GENDERDOC-M Information Center is supporting the delivery of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to homes during the lockdown. More than 90 people have received PrEP deliveries so far.</p>	<p>COVID-19 and HIV: What you need to know 29 June 2020, <i>POZ</i></p> <p>This feature story discusses the impact of COVID-19 on people living with HIV, including: the evidence on risks and protection, immune system response and the importance of continuing HIV treatment and care.</p>
<p>Update on Western Cape Data: People with HIV have small increased risks from COVID-19 26 June 2020, <i>i-Base</i></p> <p>The routine public sector data presented by the Western Cape Department of Health in a webinar in June was updated and published this week. In the paper, the authors added a sensitivity analysis to assess unmeasured confounding that could impact the association between HIV and COVID-19.</p>	<p>Old Lessons, New Pandemic: 'We showed up to do COVID-19 testing & communities told us to pack our bags' 22 June 2020, <i>Bhekisisa</i></p> <p>In South Africa, HIV prevention projects that supported voluntary medical male circumcision pivoted to the COVID-19 response. When adapting to these services, building community trust and battling misinformation remained most important.</p>	<p>Adapting Community-Based Services during COVID-19 25 June 2020, <i>aidsmap</i></p> <p>GAT Portugal provides peer-led HIV and sexual health services in addition to conducting advocacy. In the context of the pandemic, GAT adapted its services to include more online service delivery. GAT also took temperatures, asked patients about COVID-19 symptoms and offered services by appointment only.</p>

GLOBAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

<p>Africa's Unsung Army of Women Wage War on COVID-19 26 June 2020, <i>Reuters</i></p> <p>Community health workers, who are mostly women, have been integral in providing support and health services to families living in remote villages and urban slums who lack formal support. These women are now essential foot soldiers of the COVID-19 response in many countries.</p>	<p>Coronavirus Is Battering Africa's Growing Middle Class 29 June 2020, <i>New York Times</i></p> <p>The pandemic is threatening the growth of Africa's middle class. About 170 million people among the 1.3 billion in the region are now classified as middle class. According to the World Data Lab, about 8 million of them could be pushed into poverty because of the pandemic.</p>	<p>COVID-19 Casts a Shadow Over Progress on TB 29 June 2020, <i>aidsmap</i></p> <p>COVID-19 response measures have affected TB programmes and other non-COVID care. Barriers include strained health systems, patients' fear of acquiring infection and disruptions due to restricted travel.</p>
<p>Impacts of COVID-19 Disproportionately Affect Poor and Vulnerable: UN 30 June 2020, <i>UN News</i></p> <p>UN chief António Guterres noted COVID-19 impacts on the most vulnerable: people living in poverty, women and children, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups. He called for recovery plans that prioritize those at risk and expand universal social protection.</p>	<p>In Midst of COVID Chaos, One Latin American Nation Gets It Right 30 June 2020, <i>Bloomberg</i></p> <p>Uruguay has not had more than 100 active cases at a time in almost a month. The country reopened most schools and began a phased restart of the economy. In addition to early decisions to take action and close borders, Uruguay has been served well by the decades of investments in health care and social programmes.</p>	<p>Singapore Hands Out COVID-19 Contact Tracing Devices to Vulnerable Seniors 30 June 2020, <i>CGTN</i></p> <p>Singapore is issuing wearable devices for COVID-19 contact tracing to vulnerable seniors. The Bluetooth-enabled device will prompt warnings if an individual has close contact with someone with COVID-19. To allay privacy concerns, the device has no GPS or internet connectivity.</p>
<p>Companies Have Raised Prices on 245 Drugs during Pandemic, Advocacy Group Says 29 June 2020, <i>The Hill</i></p>	<p>Despite COVID Surge, Mexico Avoids Overwhelmed Hospitals 1 July 2020, <i>AP</i></p>	<p>CDC: Age nothing but a number for COVID-19 25 June 2020, <i>MedPage Today</i></p>

<p>According to a report by the Patients for Affordable Drugs, pharmaceutical companies raised prices on 245 drugs since the first COVID-19 case in the US. Sixty-one of those drugs are being used to treat COVID-19; price hikes are on par with increases in the last two years.</p>	<p>Mexico chose to invest in expanding hospital beds early in the crisis rather than in testing. Beds are now widely available, despite the country having nearly three times more deaths than predicted. Mexico has reported more than 26,000 deaths from COVID-19, though this could be an undercount due to the low testing rate.</p>	<p>The CDC published data on pregnant women with COVID-19. Pregnant women were 5.4 times more likely to be hospitalized and 1.5 times more likely to receive intensive care versus non-pregnant women. The authors noted that the differences may be due to closer medical surveillance of pregnant women.</p>
<p>In Haiti, Coronavirus Spreads in Slums, Showing Challenge for Latin America 28 June 2020, <i>SwissInfo</i></p> <p>In Haiti, coronavirus cases are increasingly spreading into poor, densely-packed neighborhoods. Residents are largely in the informal labor sector, which has been most affected by the COVID-19 response. Many in these neighborhoods cannot afford to quarantine or meet the recommended hygiene guidelines.</p>	<p>COVID-19 Infection Rate in Rio's Favelas Far Exceeds Official Count, A New Study Says 25 June 2020, <i>NPR</i></p> <p>A survey carried out by Rio de Janeiro's mayor and the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics showed coronavirus infections in almost 1 in 4 of those tested in some favelas. The findings indicate that case rates are much higher than the currently confirmed 3,600 cases in these same areas.</p>	<p>Coronavirus' Invisible Victims: Children in monetary poor households 30 June 2020, <i>Save the Children</i></p> <p>Analysis from Save the Children and UNICEF released at the end of May found that even before the pandemic, 586 children were living in monetary poor households globally. Projections on the economic impact for 2020 show an even gloomier picture, predicting a rise of 90 to 117 million children suffering poverty.</p>

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS AND CHILDREN

The *New England Journal of Medicine* published two new studies from US-based research groups on the multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children:

- [Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in U.S. Children and Adolescents](#) (29 Jun, *NEJM*)
- [Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children in New York State](#) (29 Jun, *NEJM*)

See also: editorial ([NEJM](#)) and summary ([STAT](#))

Other discussions on the syndrome include:

- [Kids' Brains Affected by COVID-Linked Inflammatory Syndrome](#) (1 July, *MedPage Today*)
- [Paging Dr. Hamblin: Are Kids Really Spared From the Coronavirus?](#) (1 July, *The Atlantic*)

An [analysis](#) by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health suggested that at least nine children died because of lockdown-related delays in getting medical treatment, which is higher than the six children who died from COVID-19.

A recent study added to the evidence that severe COVID-19 among children is rare; children diagnosed with COVID-19 generally experience mild disease with fewer deaths. The cohort study in the [Lancet Child and Adolescent Health](#) included 582 children across 25 European countries. A review in [EClinicalMedicine](#) of 7,780 paediatric patients across 131 studies also suggested that children with COVID-19 are more likely to have good outcomes compared to adults.

In the UK, the government [released plans](#) to reopen schools, colleges and nurseries in September, including guidelines to reduce risks. The American Academy of Pediatrics released [guidance](#) on school reopening that stressed the fundamental role of schools in children's health and well-being, and in addressing racial and social inequity. Starting 6 July, about 6 million students are [expected](#) to return to school in South Africa under the country's phased reopening plan. In Kenya, experts [suggested](#) reopening primary and secondary schools in January while Nigeria has [decided](#) to reopen schools only for students in graduating classes.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Updates on Vaccine Development

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the US [released guidance](#) for approving a COVID-19 vaccine, including a condition that the vaccine must be at least 50 per cent more effective than a placebo in preventing disease. As the first clinical trial for a COVID-19 vaccine began in Africa, some people [are protesting](#) due to concerns that the trials will include people who are not aware of all risks. See also: [Crafting a framework for Africa's COVID-19 vaccine access](#)

Efforts to speed up manufacturing are also continuing. The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness and Innovation (CEPI) [is buying](#) 100 million glass vials and identifying manufacturers with capacity to produce four billion vaccine doses per year. Brazil [announced](#) an agreement with Oxford and AstraZeneca to produce a vaccine that is currently in trials; the country will pay \$127 million and receive material to produce 30.4 million doses in December and January.

Treatment Updates: Hydroxychloroquine, Remdesivir, Lopinavir-Ritonavir

A global trial to examine whether hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine can prevent COVID-19 is set to restart after being approved by the British regulatory body, Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency ([Reuters](#)).

The US [announced](#) that it will secure access to more than 500,000 treatment courses of remdesivir and [faced criticism](#) from experts who are concerned about how this deal affects availability of the drug elsewhere. The UK [noted](#) that it has enough supplies currently to treat hospitalized patients. Meanwhile, Gilead in an [open letter](#) set the price for governments of developed countries at \$390 per vial and for U.S. private insurance at \$520 per vial, amounting to \$2,340 and \$3,120 respectively for a typical treatment course of remdesivir ([AP](#)).

HIV drugs lopinavir-ritonavir demonstrated no clinical benefit in hospitalized COVID-19 patients in the UK. The RECOVERY trial found no difference in mortality, length of hospital stay or the risk of being put on a ventilator between 1,596 patients who were given lopinavir-ritonavir for COVID-19 and the control group. ([Reuters](#))

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

<p>Generation Coronavirus? 27 June 2020, <i>The Lancet</i></p> <p>This editorial discusses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on children and adolescents. Disruptions stand to affect young people's health and well-being in the long term.</p>	<p>Youth Need to Be Central to Government's Policymaking 29 June 2020, <i>Mail & Guardian</i></p> <p>Activate Change Drivers, a network of young advocates in South Africa, discusses the importance of young people in policymaking for COVID-19.</p>	<p>How HIV/AIDS Changed the World 25 June 2020, <i>The Economist</i></p> <p>This commentary presents the enduring effects of the HIV epidemic and lessons learned from the HIV response for the global community, especially in the context of COVID-19.</p>
<p>Q&A: UNFPA chief on harmful practices against girls during the pandemic 30 June 2020, <i>Devex</i></p> <p>The Executive Director of UNFPA Natalia Kanem noted links between lockdowns and coercion of girls into sexual activity as well as early marriages. Harmful practices against girls are projected to rise if interventions are delayed.</p>	<p>Q&A: Henrietta Fore's biggest concerns about coronavirus and children 30 June 2020, <i>Devex</i></p> <p>The Executive Director of UNICEF Henrietta Fore listed five concerns she sees as most important to address for children in the context of COVID-19: immunization, nutrition, remote learning, water and mental health.</p>	<p>Is COVID-19 Different in People with HIV? 28 June 2020, <i>Journal Watch</i></p> <p>The author presents a summary of the current evidence on COVID-19 among individuals living with HIV and those without HIV. The early evidence is largely from small studies and definitive results are still awaited.</p>

RECENT RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

<p>Incidence and Severity of COVID-19 in HIV-Positive Persons Receiving Antiretroviral Therapy 26 June 2020, <i>Annals of Internal Medicine</i></p> <p>In this study from Spain, individuals on ART with the nucleotide reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs) tenofovir disoproxil fumarate (TDF)/emtricitabine (FTC) had lower risk of COVID-19 than those receiving other types of ART. <i>See also, for a discussion and summary: aidsmap</i></p>	<p>COVID-19 and People with HIV Infection: Outcomes for hospitalized patients in New York City 28 June 2020, <i>Clinical Infectious Diseases</i></p> <p>The researchers in New York compared outcomes of COVID-19 among people living with HIV and a matched comparison group without HIV. There was no difference in COVID-19 severity on admission by HIV status for the 88 patients included in the study.</p>	<p>Disproportionate Burden of COVID-19 Among Racial Minorities and Those in Congregate Settings Among a Large Cohort of People With HIV 25 June 2020, <i>Clinical Infectious Diseases</i></p> <p>The authors examined characteristics of people living with HIV with COVID-19 in Massachusetts. About 77 per cent of people with HIV hospitalized with COVID-19 were Black or Latinx. Nearly half of patients included had exposure to congregate settings.</p>
<p>SARS-CoV-2 and HIV Coinfection: Clinical experience from Rhode Island, United States 19 June 2020, <i>Journal of International AIDS Society</i></p> <p>The authors present clinical experience of HIV and SARS-CoV-2 coinfection from Rhode Island, US. The paper describes 27 people living with HIV treated for COVID-19; the clinical findings suggest COVID-19 presents similarly for people living with HIV and those without HIV.</p>	<p>Clinical Outcomes and Immunologic Characteristics of COVID-19 in People with HIV 30 June 2020, <i>Journal of Infectious Diseases</i></p> <p>The retrospective chart review from New York City examined characteristics and outcomes of people living with HIV with COVID-19. Those who died were more likely to require intensive care and ventilator support. There was no difference in mortality by age, sex, duration of HIV infection or presenting CD4 count.</p>	<p>Outcomes of a Rapid Adolescent Telehealth Scale-Up During the COVID-19 Pandemic 30 June 2020, <i>Journal of Adolescent Health</i></p> <p>The paper describes the scale-up of adolescent telehealth programmes in response to COVID-19 at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, US. Six per cent of video visits were for HIV treatment. Patients who were non-white had lower visit rates than white patients.</p>

New resources for global, regional and country level practitioners working on HIV during the COVID-19 pandemic are presented below. To find additional documents and join the discussion, visit: www.childrenandaids.org/COVID19

RESOURCES

<p>United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19: Saving lives, protecting societies, recovering better 25 June 2020</p> <p>This report is an overview of the UN response to COVID-19, recounting key guidance, lessons and support so far. It also outlines the path forward to ensure no one is left behind and vulnerabilities are addressed.</p>	<p>COVID-19: What Paediatric HIV Programmes Need to Know - Planning for reopening WEBINAR 29 June 2020</p> <p>UNICEF's Children and AIDS Learning Collaborative hosted a webinar on COVID-19, children, pregnant women and HIV. It included research updates, global guidance, implications for HIV service delivery and frontline perspectives from South Africa.</p>	<p>Strategic Leveraging of HIVST in COVID-19 Pandemic WEBINAR 30 June 2020</p> <p>PSI hosted a discussion on adapting HIV self-testing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Case studies from Vietnam, Ukraine, Zambia and West Africa were presented.</p>
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UPCOMING EVENTS

- 6-10 July 2020: The 23rd International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2020: Virtual) will be hosted online. *Multiple times. Explore the Roadmap to find events on children, adolescents and pregnant women >> [More](#)*
- 10-11 July 2020: The International AIDS Society presents a Virtual COVID-19 Conference on breaking research, policy analysis and frontline experience. *Multiple times, free of charge >> [More](#)*

To submit feedback or content for inclusion in our weekly digests, please email Rikke Le Kirkegaard at rlekirkegaard@unicef.org.