

COVID-19 and HIV: Weekly Digest

10 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 AT THE 23RD INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE (AIDS2020: VIRTUAL)

UNAIDS Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic Shows that 2020 Targets Will Not Be Met Because of Deeply Unequal Success; COVID-19 Risks Blowing HIV Progress Off Course
6 July 2020, *UNAIDS*

The [AIDS 2020 report by UNAIDS](#) outlines progress on global HIV targets but notes that achievements have not been made equally within and between countries. The report also warns that severe disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic can set back progress on HIV targets by ten years or more. *See also: ‘AIDS report: Kids are lagging and COVID-19 is harming care’ (AP)*

London Study Shows People with HIV Not at Greater Risk of Severe COVID-19 Illness

4 July 2020, *aidsmap*

According to a study from London, people with HIV did not suffer worse outcomes after being hospitalized with COVID-19. The researchers noted that after controlling for age and other confounding factors, people with HIV experienced more rapid improvement than matched patients without HIV.

See also: ‘HIV may not worsen COVID-19 outlook’ (Study from US); ‘HIV raises the risk of death from COVID-19 in South Africa’s Western Cape’ (Study from South Africa)

Efforts to Beat the Coronavirus Pandemic Could Cause Over 1 Million Extra Deaths from Other Diseases, Experts Warn

6 July 2020, *CNN*

According to a [new report by the International AIDS Society](#), economic shifts and disruptions to health services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic could derail progress made in HIV across the world. Recent models from the WHO, Stop TB Partnership and Imperial College London predicted an extra 1 million deaths from HIV, TB and malaria due to these disruptions.

COVID-19 Knocks HIV Goals ‘Completely Off Track’

6 July 2020, *Healio*

The article summarizes four sessions on the impact of COVID-19 on HIV. This includes the pandemic’s effects on PrEP services, increasing the vulnerability of certain populations, access to HIV medicines and inequities seen in both epidemics.

See also: ‘COVID-19 forces biggest HIV conference to go virtual...’ (TimesLIVE)

WHO: Access to HIV medicines severely impacted by COVID-19 as AIDS response stalls

6 July 2020, *WHO*

In a survey by the WHO, seventy-three countries warned that they are at risk of stock-outs of antiretroviral medicines due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Twenty four of these countries specifically reported having either a critically low stock of ARVs or disruptions in the supply of these life-saving medicines.

COVID-19 Has Had a Major Impact on Prep, Sexual Behaviour And Service Provision

9 July 2020, *aidsmap*

Several studies highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on PrEP use, sexual activity and number of partners among men who have sex with men in the US and Australia. Notably, among survey respondents in Australia who stopped using PrEP, 86 per cent noted COVID-19 as one of the reasons.

COVID-19: IMPACT ON HIV AND HIV SERVICE DELIVERY

Coronavirus: ‘Brilliant’ opportunity to combat HIV as demand for home tests rises during lockdown

5 July 2020, *Sky News*

The number of free HIV self-testing kits issued in London was 20 per cent higher during the first eight weeks of the COVID-19 lockdown than the same period last year. In some parts of London, demand for home testing kits increased by over 70 per cent.

Unlocking HIV/AIDS Financing during COVID-19

6 July 2020, *Devex*

The COVID-19 pandemic is straining country budgets and raising concerns for HIV/AIDS financing, especially for low-income countries that are reliant on foreign aid for their HIV response. Total aid volume is expected to decrease.

Support for Uzbek Mothers Living with HIV

8 July 2020, *UNAIDS*

In Uzbekistan, maternal health care providers and HIV care providers are working to ensure more protections for mothers and their babies during the COVID-19 pandemic. UNAIDS and UNFPA have donated personal protective equipment to maternal hospitals.

GLOBAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

How Different Countries Have Handled COVID-19, Ranked

7 July 2020, *UN Dispatch*

A [new report](#), published by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, ranked countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-

COVID-19 Pandemic in Africa Is Now Reaching ‘Full Speed’

9 July 2020, *AP*

Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed over 522,000 cases on the continent with South Africa making up over 224,000

Coronavirus: Spanish study casts doubt on herd immunity feasibility

7 July 2020, *BBC*

A large study recently published in [The Lancet](#) found that only 5 per cent of the population in Spain developed antibodies to the novel coronavirus.

operation and Development (OECD) on how well they contained COVID-19 and minimized economic damage. It placed South Korea as the most effective and the UK as the least.	of them. These numbers might be underestimated because most testing has been concentrated in capital cities while infections may now have spread to other regions.	The results raise questions about the feasibility of reaching herd immunity.
Bolsonaro Made Brazil a Pandemic Pariah 7 July 2020, <i>Foreign Affairs</i> While Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's pandemic response has been criticized, some local leaders are drawing praise because of their work drawing on Brazil's universal public health system, called the SUS, to mobilize a better response.	The Pandemic Could Push Nearly 50 Million More Africans into Extreme Poverty, Afdb Says 7 July 2020, <i>Devex</i> The African Development Bank revised its annual economic outlook report for the first time. It predicted that 49.2 million additional people in Africa may enter extreme poverty by 2021 because of the pandemic.	COVID-19 Pandemic Accelerating and Global Peak Still to Come: WHO 7 July 2020, <i>France24</i> The WHO noted that 400,000 new cases of COVID-19 were reported over the weekend. The outbreak is accelerating. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stressed that we have not reached the peak of the pandemic.

COVID-19 AND INEQUALITY

Coronavirus Lockdowns Increasing HIV Risk to Women and Girls 6 July 2020, <i>Thomson Reuters Foundation</i> UNAIDS highlighted how lockdowns are increasing the risk of HIV infections among women and girls globally. COVID-19 lockdowns affect education, protection from sexual violence and access to medical care.	Study of 17 Million Identifies Crucial Risk Factors for Coronavirus Deaths 8 June 2020, <i>New York Times</i> In a new study in Nature , analysis of more than 17 million people in England identified older people, men, racial and ethnic minorities as well as those with underlying health conditions as being more vulnerable to COVID-19.	In France, Study Shows Virus Hit African Immigrants Hardest 8 June 2020, <i>AP</i> According to a study by NSEE , the French government's statistics agency, death rates among immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa doubled in France and tripled in the Paris region during the peak of the pandemic in the area.
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NOVEL CORONAVIRUS AND CHILDREN

Recent publications on the multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children related to SARS-CoV-2 infections include a small case series from London describing brain damage associated with the syndrome ([summary](#)) and an analysis of the systemic inflammation and antibody responses seen ([summary](#)). See:

- [Neurologic and radiographic findings associated with COVID-19 infection in children](#) (1 July, *JAMA Neurology*)
- [Mapping Systemic Inflammation and Antibody Responses in Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children](#) (4 July, pre-print)

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [approved](#) an investigational allogeneic mesenchymal stem cell product for the paediatric multisystem inflammatory syndrome. Children aged between 2 months and 17 years may receive one or two compassionate use doses of a stem cell therapy.

Science [described](#) considerations for policies and programmes on reopening schools across the world. All schools in Kenya will [remain closed](#) until January 2021. The government had been providing school programmes on the radio, television and online since March but as in other countries, access to these resources remain uneven.

According to a [report](#) by World Vision, millions more children around the world are being forced into begging and experiencing hunger due to the pandemic. Meanwhile, an analysis in the [Canadian Medical Association Journal](#) notes that indirect effects of the pandemic on children will have long-term consequences. This includes delayed medical care and mental trauma. See also: '[Children could be facing long-term health effects indirectly linked to COVID-19](#)'

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Updates on Vaccine Development

The South African Medical Research Council's Professor Jeffrey Mphahlele [discusses](#) the features and challenges of the first COVID-19 vaccine trial in the country. In the UK, Imperial College's Professor Robin Shattock [discusses](#) the experimental RNA vaccine candidate with 'cautious optimism.' A recent survey in the study [suggests](#) that nearly one in six British adults would refuse the COVID-19 vaccine after it becomes available.

The US National Institutes of Health [established](#) a new clinical trials network that will enroll thousands of volunteers in clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccines and monoclonal antibodies. The US government also [committed](#) \$2 billion to Novovax Inc. and Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc. for vaccine development and manufacturing treatment.

Meanwhile, POLITICO [featured](#) the dangers of international competition to develop a novel coronavirus vaccine and the WHO [published](#) landscape documents of COVID-19 vaccine candidates.

Treatment Updates: Hydroxychloroquine, Lopinavir-Ritonavir, Remdesivir

The WHO [said](#) on Saturday that it was discontinuing trials of hydroxychloroquine and combination HIV drug lopinavir/ritonavir for patients hospitalized with COVID-19 based on results showing a failure to reduce mortality. A study from China published in the [Journal of Medical Virology](#) indicated that the use of lopinavir/ritonavir is associated with pneumonia resolution for patients with COVID-19.

The European Commission [allowed](#) authorization for remdesivir to treat COVID-19. A case report from The Hague [spotlighted](#) concerns on liver toxicity linked to remdesivir.

South Africa [will be looking](#) at African herbs and formulations for treating COVID-19, particularly through the work of the newly-established Natural Indigenous Products Fund.

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

<p>We Can't End AIDS Without Fighting Racism 9 July 2020, <i>The Atlantic</i></p> <p>Elton John writes about racial disparities seen in the HIV epidemic as well as during the COVID-19 pandemic, and urges a stronger focus on addressing racism and inequality.</p>	<p>Reckoning with Mortality: Global health, HIV, and the politics of data 3 July 2020, <i>The Lancet</i></p> <p>The authors describe the politics of data, such as the type of data collected, for what use and by whom. A lesson from HIV is that to reduce mortality, a more robust approach to tracking is needed.</p>	<p>The global AIDS meeting, the Woodstock of science gatherings, goes virtual amid COVID-19 2 July 2020, <i>Science</i></p> <p>In this interview, infectious disease physician Anton Pozniak discusses AIDS2020: Virtual, the impact of COVID-19 on HIV science and the focus of the conference.</p>
<p>Opinion: Ensuring services for people with advanced HIV disease — more important than ever 3 July 2020, <i>Devex</i></p> <p>Patients with advanced HIV disease are more likely to be affected by pandemic-related HIV service delivery disruptions. In addition, because HIV testing services have been affected, new HIV diagnoses are delayed and risks of developing advanced HIV disease are increasing.</p>	<p>Women are most affected by pandemics — lessons from past outbreaks 8 July 2020, <i>Nature</i></p> <p>The authors note that, like during the Ebola and Zika outbreaks, the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 will impact women harder than men. Women's socio-economic security is being challenged across the world, and governments need to take action.</p>	<p>Disease and the disorder in the COVID-19 crisis 6 July 2020, <i>Mail and Guardian</i></p> <p>The commentary discusses narratives that shame and stigmatize those affected by a disease. These serve to further historical inequities and prevent equitable access to health care. These narratives seen during the HIV epidemic and its response are again emerging as a feature of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
<p>How the coronavirus pandemic impacts HIV patients 8 July 2020, <i>DW</i></p> <p>In a video interview, an expert HIV researcher discusses the pandemic's impact on the supply chain of antiretroviral medicines for HIV.</p>	<p>The forgotten pandemic—the fight against HIV continues 8 July 2020, <i>The Economist</i></p> <p>In a segment of the Economist Radio, the Director of HIV programmes at WHO outlines the impact of COVID-19 on access to HIV medications.</p>	<p>HIV, COVID-19 and the importance of public health 8 July 2020, <i>The Hill</i></p> <p>An infectious disease physician writes about the need to have a strong public health system to maintain HIV testing and treatment services.</p>

RECENT RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

<p>Attendance to HIV Antiretroviral Collection Clinic Appointments During COVID-19 Lockdown. A Single center study in Kigali, Rwanda 25 June 2020, <i>AIDS and Behavior</i></p> <p>This single center study examined attendance at clinic appointments for collecting ART during the lockdown in Kigali, Rwanda. Factors associated with attendance included place of residence and WHO clinical stage.</p>	<p>HIV and SARS CoV-2 Co-Infection: A retrospective, record based, case series from South India 7 July 2020, <i>Journal of Medical Virology</i></p> <p>In this letter from Tamil Nadu, India, the authors describe characteristics of six people living with HIV with SARS-CoV-2 co-infection. All patients were hospitalized but did not have coronavirus-related complications and were discharged after recovery.</p>	<p>Multimonth Dispensing of Antiretroviral Therapy for HIV 1 July 2020, <i>The Lancet HIV</i></p> <p>This letter discusses the implementation of multimonth dispensing of ART for HIV. While these recommendations were made earlier, reducing the number of refills has been especially relevant in the context of COVID-19.</p>
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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>Start Free Stay Free AIDS Free - 2020 report 7 July 2020</p> <p>This report from UNAIDS shows that while much progress has been made on global HIV targets, progress on eliminating new infections and preventing AIDS-related deaths among children is lagging.</p>	<p>Children, HIV and AIDS: How will progress be impacted by COVID-19? July 2020</p> <p>UNICEF notes that while recent data shows that the gap in HIV service delivery for pregnant women and children have been steadily closing, pandemic-related service disruptions threaten to reverse this progress.</p>	<p>HIV2020 Plenary: Communities Reclaiming the Global Response VIDEO 6 July 2020</p> <p>Hosted online as a community-led event, HIV2020 opened with a plenary on the importance of community engagement and leadership in the HIV response and in the global response to COVID-19.</p>
<p>COVID-19 and HIV: A tale of two pandemics 6 July 2020</p> <p>This report from the International AIDS Society outlines how COVID-19 disrupts the HIV response and makes recommendations for policy makers, healthcare providers, researchers, communities and funders.</p>	<p>AIDS 2020: Virtual DAILY - Episode One ft. Dr Anthony Fauci & Community Members VIDEO 6 July 2020</p> <p>During <i>AIDS2020: Virtual</i>, daily videos feature HIV science and community leaders. In this episode, NIAID's Anthony Fauci discusses the impact of COVID-19 on HIV research and care.</p>	<p>Take as Directed / Coronavirus Crisis Update PODCAST May-July 2020</p> <p>The CSIS Global Health Policy Center highlights global perspectives and analysis on COVID-19, including a discussion on South Africa's COVID-19 response and its impact on those living with HIV.</p>

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **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](#)
- **15 July 2020:** Devex and CDC Group is hosting a discussion on women's economic empowerment and livelihoods in the context of the pandemic. *9am ET / 3pm SAST* >> [More](#)

To submit feedback or content for inclusion in our weekly digests, please email [Rikke Le Kirkegaard](mailto:Rikke.LeKirkegaard@unicef.org) at rlkirkegaard@unicef.org.