

COVID-19 and HIV: Weekly Digest

12 June 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>Coronavirus Disrupts HIV prevention efforts in Africa 7 June 2020, <i>The East African</i></p> <p>Lockdowns and restrictions have caused health system disruptions across Africa. Among HIV-related services, interviews suggest that HIV prevention services, especially for populations considered most at risk for HIV, were the most disrupted.</p>	<p>‘Flying blind’: Doctors race to understand what COVID-19 means for people with HIV 10 June 2020, <i>STAT</i></p> <p>Doctors are trying to understand the implications of COVID-19 on people with HIV. A new study with CNIS, a network of HIV research centers, is aiming to find out more with a larger dataset of patients with HIV.</p>	<p>Is Telemedicine for HIV Here to Stay? 8 June 2020, <i>aidsmap</i></p> <p>Adapting to COVID-19 accelerated the uptake of telemedicine interventions for HIV prevention and treatment in many settings. Some are asking if these remote services, provided via video and phone calls, apps and social media, will remain a part of HIV service delivery.</p>
<p>Peer Consultants Helping the AIDS Response in Kyrgyzstan 10 June 2020, <i>UNAIDS</i></p> <p>Peer consultants in Kyrgyzstan have been working in an expanded capacity since the pandemic began. They are delivering medicines, distributing food packages and providing psychological support for people living with HIV.</p>	<p>Tajik Businesses Run by Women Living with HIV Supply Key Protective Gear for COVID-19 Response 8 June 2020, <i>UN Women</i></p> <p>A small business run by women living with HIV is supplying protection masks during the pandemic. In 2019, it participated in a business training by a UN Women- UNAIDS project.</p>	<p>COVID-19 Lockdown in Wuhan: Community group delivers HIV medicine 8 June 2020, <i>UNAIDS</i></p> <p>A community-based center in Wuhan, China quickly responded to the city’s lockdown to ensure people living with HIV continue treatment. By March, they delivered medicines to nearly 3,000 people with HIV.</p>
<p>People with HIV at Greater Risk Of COVID-19 Death in South African Study 10 June 2020, <i>aidsmap</i></p> <p>In a recent webinar (see: recording and slides), South Africa’s Western Cape Department of Health described a preliminary analysis of routine public sector data that suggests people with HIV have an increased risk of death from COVID-19. The researcher noted that the numbers are still low and almost all people with HIV who died had comorbidities, such as diabetes or hypertension.</p>	<p>Lockdown, hunger and staying on HIV treatment in Hammonds Farm 10 June 2020, <i>Maverick Citizen</i></p> <p>This article describes the impact of COVID-19 on people living with HIV in a community in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Most people living with HIV in this area worked in the informal sector and lost their jobs. Vulnerability to hunger and poverty is a barrier to being able to continue HIV treatment and care.</p>	

GLOBAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

<p>With No Current Cases, New Zealand Lifts Remaining COVID-19 Restrictions 8 June 2020, <i>NPR</i></p> <p>Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said New Zealand has eradicated COVID-19 and lifted all restrictions. The country had 1,500 infections and 22 deaths.</p>	<p>Global Report: WHO urges Pakistan to return to lockdown 10 June 2020, <i>The Guardian</i></p> <p>The WHO urged Pakistan to return to lockdown and suggested implementing restrictions in two-week cycles. This global report also describes the rising numbers in South America.</p>	<p>COVID-19 Can Last for Several Months 4 June 2020, <i>The Atlantic</i></p> <p>According to the WHO, about 80 per cent of SARS-CoV-2 infections are mild or asymptomatic. However, some patients are reporting a range of debilitating symptoms that have lasted a month or more.</p>	<p>Coronavirus: John Magufuli declares Tanzania free of COVID-19 8 June 2020, <i>BBC</i></p> <p>President John Magufuli declared that Tanzania is free of the coronavirus. The data has not been publicly available since 29 April.</p>
<p>COVID-19 Infections are Rising Fast in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan 6 June 2020, <i>The Economist</i></p> <p>While Bangladesh, India and Pakistan have mostly lifted lockdown, the number of COVID-19 cases continue to</p>	<p>Why Forecasters Can't Make Up Their Mind About Africa and the Coronavirus 10 June 2020, <i>NPR</i></p> <p>There are a range of predictions about the spread of the SAR-CoV-2 virus in</p>	<p>China Defends its Coronavirus Response in New Report 8 June 2020, <i>AP</i></p> <p>A new report from China asserts that the country quickly shared information about the new virus,</p>	<p>Hundreds of Coronavirus Deaths Confirmed in Nigeria, as Doctors Go on Strike 9 June 2020, <i>The Telegraph</i></p>

increase. At the current pace, the numbers are doubling every two weeks.	Africa and many misjudge the region's heterogeneity. <i>See also:</i> Africa's coronavirus 'hotspots' in South Africa, Algeria, Cameroon: WHO	including its gene sequence, with the WHO and others.	In Nigeria, government doctors are preparing for a strike to protest low salaries and poor working conditions.
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COVID-19 AND INEQUALITY

<p>COVID-19 Just the Latest Epidemic in Areas Struck by Disease 11 June 2020, <i>AP</i></p> <p>In many settings, COVID-19 is adding to a list of infectious diseases including polio, ebola, cholera, dengue, TB and malaria. These are often aggravated by poverty, malnutrition and medical care as well as violence and instability.</p>	<p>'Enormous Disparities': coronavirus death rates expose Brazil's deep racial inequalities 9 June 2020, <i>The Guardian</i></p> <p>In Brazil, a new study is adding to the evidence that black Brazilians are disproportionately dying of COVID-19. The virus is now spreading in poorer areas.</p> <p><i>See also, blog:</i> COVID-19 in Latin America: A pandemic meets extreme inequality</p>	<p>COVID Crisis Could Worsen Existing UK Inequality, Think Tank Says 11 June 2020, <i>Reuters</i></p> <p>The Institute for Fiscal Studies noted that the virus is increasing inequalities in the UK. The gap in death rates between rich and poor neighbourhoods have widened, and new infections are disproportionately higher among Black people.</p>	<p>Stolen Breaths 10 June 2020, <i>New England Journal of Medicine</i></p> <p>The article discusses the simultaneous health impacts of the pandemic and racial inequality for Black Americans and suggests five practices to address racial inequality in healthcare.</p> <p><i>See also, editorial:</i> Diagnosing and Treating Systemic Racism</p>
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NOVEL CORONAVIRUS AND CHILDREN

New research on the multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children related to SARS-CoV-2 include:

- A case series in [JAMA](#) describes symptoms and clinical course of 58 children hospitalized with the inflammatory syndrome in the UK. Nearly half were Black or Asian, and the median age was nine years.
- Another paper in [JAMA](#) describes 17 children admitted to hospitals in New York with the syndrome. Median age was eight years. *See also, editorial:* [SARS-CoV-2–related inflammatory multisystem syndrome in children. Different or shared etiology and pathophysiology as Kawasaki disease?](#)
- An article in [Eurosurveillance](#) describes results of a nationwide surveillance in France conducted from 1 March to 7 May. The authors estimated the risk of the syndrome to be fewer than 2 cases per 10,000 children. *For an explanation of results, see:* [Studies yield clearer picture of rare COVID-linked syndrome in kids](#)
- [Gastroenterology](#) published a chart review of 44 children hospitalized with the multisystem inflammatory syndrome in New York. Gastrointestinal symptoms were prominent in 84 per cent of cases. *For an explanation of results:* [GI Issues in Kids With COVID-19 MIS-C May Muddy Diagnosis](#)

While schools reopened in South Africa this week, [Reuters](#) reported that some parents remained concerned about safeguards in schools to reduce infections. Officials in the Philippines [announced](#) that children will not be allowed to go back to school until a vaccine is available; online or TV classes will resume in August. [The Wall Street Journal](#) featured the implications of the pandemic on education in Asia, noting that it may reverse gains in increasing access to education among those affected by poverty.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Updates on Vaccine Development

A COVID-19 vaccine being developed in China [showed promise](#) in trials in monkeys, triggering antibodies and raising no safety issues.

European officials are [aiming to speed up](#) the trial process for vaccines with genetically modified organisms (GMOs); officials noted that some of the most promising COVID-19 vaccine candidates contain GMOs.

Imperial College scientists are aiming to [bring a low-cost vaccine](#) early next year through a social enterprise called VacEquity Global Health.

Treatment Updates: Hydroxychloroquine, Remdesivir

After finding no evidence of benefit, UK researchers [terminated the hydroxychloroquine arm](#) of its national RECOVERY clinical trial. *See also:* [Three big studies dim hopes that hydroxychloroquine can treat or prevent COVID-19 \(Science\)](#)

Remdesivir, Gilead's antiviral drug, [prevented](#) lung disease in macaque monkeys with SARS-CoV-2 infections. The results were published this week in [Nature](#).

Singapore [approved the use](#) of remdesivir for severely ill patients with COVID-19, joining South Korea, Japan, India and US in doing so. The European Medicines Agency [said](#) it would look to fast-track remdesivir's approval.

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

COVID-19: The state cannot save us

9 June 2020, *African Arguments*

With the example of South Africa, the authors note that while there is a robust biomedical response to the pandemic at the state level, there has not been enough focus on enlisting citizens as partners and mobilizing them to combat the pandemic.

Surviving HIV in the Age of COVID-19

5 June 2020, *Human Rights Campaign*

On National HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day, the Human Rights Campaign interviewed two advocates and long-term HIV survivors about HIV and the impact of COVID-19.

Protecting Midwives and Mothers During the Pandemic

9 June 2020, *Project Syndicate*

The authors highlight the need for continued focus and funding for maternal health services. Even as COVID-19 becomes the priority for health systems, mothers and midwives need to be protected.

<p>South Africa must adopt a localised response to COVID-19. What it would look like 9 June 2020, <i>The Conversation</i></p> <p>In South Africa, COVID-19 infections are clustered within geographical areas and some populations are at higher risk. This is similar to the HIV epidemic and those learnings should inform a localised response.</p>	<p>Let's Not Forget Children Living with HIV/AIDS during COVID-19 Pandemic 5 June 2020, <i>The Southern Times</i></p> <p>This op-ed highlights the challenges faced by children living with HIV. During COVID-19, the nutritional needs of these children who must continue treatment should be considered.</p>	<p>How Many More Will Die from Fear of the Coronavirus? 9 June 2020, <i>New York Times</i></p> <p>The leaders of the Cleveland Clinic and Mayo Clinic urge people with other health conditions or needing emergency care to return to seeking services at hospitals and clinics.</p> <p>See also: ED Visits Down 49% since January, Analysis Reveals</p>
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AROUND THE UNITED NATIONS

- The WHO [noted](#) that the COVID-19 pandemic is worsening globally and urged continued caution; more than 136,000 cases were recorded on Sunday, the highest number in a single day.
- UN ECOSOC [heard](#) appeals to increase funding to the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan.
- According to the World Bank's latest [Global Economic Prospects report](#), the global economy will shrink by 5.2 per cent this year, which will be the deepest recession since World War Two, due to the pandemic.

RECENT RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

<p>Letter to the Editor: The Characteristics of Two Patients Co-Infected with SARS-CoV-2 and HIV in Wuhan, China 10 June 2020, <i>Journal of Medical Virology</i></p> <p>This letter describes two young male patients living with HIV who were admitted to a hospital in Wuhan, China with COVID-19. It describes their clinical and laboratory features as well as treatment approach and outcomes.</p>	<p>The COVID-19 Response Must Integrate People Living with HIV Needs in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of Mali 3 June 2020, <i>Tropical Medicine and Health</i></p> <p>This letter makes recommendations on integrating care for people living with HIV into the COVID-19 response in Mali. Community engagement is suggested as critical to ensure continuity of care for people living with HIV.</p>
<p>Prevalence, clinical characteristics and treatment outcomes of HIV and SARS-CoV-2 co-infection: a systematic review and meta-analysis 3 June 2020, <i>preprint</i></p> <p>The authors reviewed 17 studies to examine the prevalence, clinical characteristics and outcomes of HIV and SARS-CoV-2 co-infection. The pooled prevalence of co-infection was 1 per cent and clinical characteristics were comparable to people without HIV.</p>	<p>COVID-19 in HIV-Infected Individuals: Preliminary Results of a Prospective Cohort 2 June 2020, <i>preprint</i></p> <p>This observational study compared characteristics of patients at an HIV clinic in Spain with COVID-19 and characteristics of patients at the clinic before the pandemic. These preliminary findings indicate that COVID-19 predominantly affects people living with HIV with comorbidities.</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>Prioritizing the Continuity of Services for Adolescents Living with HIV during the COVID-19 Pandemic 5 June 2020</p> <p>UNICEF released an information note on addressing the vulnerabilities and needs of adolescents living with HIV within national COVID-19 responses.</p>	<p>COVID-19 and Children Living with HIV: Preventing widening inequalities June 2020</p> <p>This op-ed from UNICEF discusses projections of additional AIDS-related deaths and adds recommendations to prevent worsening inequalities.</p>	<p>COVID-19 Impacts on African Children: How to protect a-generation at risk 8 June 2020</p> <p>Save the Children's policy paper outlines how COVID-19 increases risks to children's rights and well-being in Africa.</p>
<p>Strategic Considerations for Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Key Population-Focused HIV Programs 4 June 2020</p> <p>FHI 360, with UNAIDS, presents considerations to address the impact of COVID-19 on key populations.</p>	<p>Advice on the Use of Masks in the Context of COVID-19: Interim guidance 5 June 2020</p> <p>The WHO released updated guidelines on wearing masks for health workers and the public.</p>	<p>DSD, Supply Chain and COVID-19: What to expect and how to be prepared WEBINAR 9 June 2020</p> <p>ICAP at Columbia University and DSD hosted a webinar on health product supply chain, including ART, during the pandemic.</p>
<p>PEPFAR Technical Guidance in Context of COVID-19 Pandemic UPDATED 5 June 2020</p> <p>Updates can be found in sections on DREAMS, commodity delays and PEPFAR COVID-related resources.</p>	<p>COVID in Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa Region: An Update WEBINAR 3 June 2020</p> <p>ICAP and Columbia Global Centers hosted a webinar on COVID-19 in the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa Region.</p>	<p>HIV & COVID-19 – What do we know so far? PODCAST 4 June 2020</p> <p>The Sexually Transmitted Infections journal hosted a discussion on information for clinicians and patients about HIV and COVID-19.</p>

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **16 Jun 2020:** ICAP at Columbia University and DSD webinar series will continue on Tuesday next week. Details TBA. *8am ET | 2pm SAST* >> [More](#)
- **18 Jun 2020:** UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti will host a webinar on the pandemic's impact on worsening learning gaps. *9am ET | 3pm SAST* >> [More](#)

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