

COVID-19 and HIV: November Digest

4 December 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.

The digest is now published monthly. For previous issues: childrenandaids.org/covid19/digest

COVID-19: IMPACT ON THE HIV EPIDEMIC AND PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

Study Shows How COVID-19 Is Impacting Access to HIV Care in the Russian Federation

27 November 2020, *UNAIDS*

A [new study](#) described the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on access to HIV care in the Russian Federation, noting that people living with HIV were less likely to seek testing for COVID-19. More than 900 people from 68 regions of the Russian Federation responded to a survey. Of those living with HIV, more than a third reported some impact on HIV services; however, the majority did not experience problems obtaining ART.

320,000 children and adolescents newly infected with HIV in 2019, 1 every 100 seconds – UNICEF

25 November 2020, *UNICEF*

UNICEF's [new report](#) highlights gaps in the global HIV response for children adolescents and pregnant women. Inequities in accessing HIV services have been exacerbated by COVID-19. In a survey of 29 HIV priority countries, a third noted that HIV service coverage for children, adolescents and women living with and vulnerable to HIV decreased by 10 per cent or more compared to coverage before the pandemic.
See also: [Media launch](#)

Can HIV Meds Interact With COVID-19 Treatment? Here's What We Know So Far

24 November 2020, *TheBody*

In the U.S., the Centers for AIDS Research Network of Integrated Clinical Systems (CNICS) is studying drug interactions between approved COVID-19 medicines and antiretrovirals for HIV with data from 15,000 people living with HIV. The researchers present the findings thus far on COVID-19 treatments in people living with HIV.

COVID-19 Controls Used to Arrest, Torture HIV Sufferers

25 November 2020, *SciDev.Net*

A report by SciDev.Net and the Bureau of Investigative Journalism notes that people living with HIV have been arrested and denied medication during the pandemic. Lockdown regulations have been exceptionally discriminatory against members of the LGBTQI community.

Unstable Housing Explains Higher Rates of COVID-19 in People with HIV in San Francisco

5 November 2020, *Aidsmap*

A [report](#) in the *JAIDS* from San Francisco notes that half of people living with HIV who tested positive for COVID-19 had housing problems. While the city averaged a positivity rate of 3.5 per cent when testing for COVID-19 among those without HIV, the positivity rate among people with HIV was 4.5 per cent.

HIV Infections Drop by a Third

23 November 2020, *SWI*

In Switzerland, new HIV infections reported at the end of 2020 dropped by about a third compared to the same period last year. The Swiss AIDS Federation attributes this to the COVID-19 pandemic, noting that the drop may be due to decreases in HIV testing coverage or because the restrictions have impacted sexual behavior.

Progress in AIDS Fight Despite Corona

20 November 2020, *The Southern Times*

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Executive Secretary noted that SADC member states have made significant progress in the HIV response despite challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the virtual conference, progress in Eswatini, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe toward the 90-90-90 targets were highlighted.

See also: [COVID-19 Committee Chair Notes Decrease in TB and HIV Testing in South Africa](#)

HIV: New diagnoses among gay and bisexual men at lowest level in 20 years

6 November 2020, *The Guardian*

A Public Health England (PHE) report found that new HIV diagnoses dropped by 10 per cent this year and noted the infection rate was falling even before the pandemic and lockdown reduced sexual contacts. PHE said the decline could be attributed to HIV prevention measures and more effective treatment options that reduce viral loads to undetectable and untransmissible levels.

COVID-19 RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Updates on Vaccine Development

Pfizer and BioNTech [reported](#) results from a COVID-19 vaccine trial of almost 44,000 participants showing a 95 per cent efficacy rate. The primary analysis included 170 cases of COVID-19 in study participants without prior infection of SARS-CoV-2; among these, there were 162 cases of COVID-19 in the placebo group and 8 cases in the group receiving the vaccine candidate. They also reported meeting the safety milestones defined by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for Emergency Use Authorization. *See also:* [Bloomberg](#)

Moderna [reported](#) a 94.5 per cent efficacy rate with 30,000 volunteers in Phase 3 trials of its vaccine candidate. The primary analysis included 196 cases of COVID-19; of these, 185 cases were in the placebo group and 11 were in the

group receiving the vaccine candidate. There were no severe cases of COVID-19 in the group receiving the vaccine. The company also reported meeting the safety milestone set by the US FDA for Emergency Use Authorization. See also: [NPR](#)

The University of Oxford and AstraZeneca's vaccine candidate [reported](#) that their vaccine is 70.4 per cent effective when combining data from two dosing regimens. The results showed a 90 per cent efficacy rate when trial participants received a half dose followed by a full dose at least one month apart; when two full doses were given at least one month apart, the study reported 62 per cent efficacy. See also: [Wall Street Journal](#)

Other vaccine topics of note: Efficacy, which is reported by these clinical trials, and effectiveness, which is how well the vaccine prevents infections in the real world, are not the same measurement ([New York Times](#)). The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and the Moderna candidates are mRNA vaccines while the AstraZeneca-Oxford candidate is adenovirus-based using a chimpanzee viral vector ([BioSpace](#)). There are also other COVID-19 vaccine candidates with different mechanisms currently in Phase 3 trials ([Regulatory Focus tracker](#)). See also:

- Clinical Outcomes of a COVID-19 Vaccine: Implementation over efficacy ([Health Affairs](#))
- COVID-19 Vaccines Poised for Launch, But Impact on Pandemic Unclear ([Nature](#))

Vaccine Approvals and Policy

The UK [authorized](#) the vaccine from Pfizer and BioNTech, becoming the first country to approve the vaccine. The Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations (JCVI) recommended priority groups to receive the vaccine, including healthcare workers, care home residents, the elderly and the clinically extremely vulnerable. Roll-out will begin in the first week of December with 800,000 doses ([Al Jazeera](#)).

In the US, a decision on the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine by the FDA is expected in the first week of December. The CDC noted that once the FDA provides authorization for a vaccine, its Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will hold a public meeting to review available data and make recommendations. The [current recommendations](#) once a COVID-19 vaccine is authorized for the initial phase (Phase 1a) of vaccine delivery is for healthcare personnel and residents of long-term care facilities.

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) is [considering](#) conditional marketing authorization for the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, and conducting a rolling review of the Oxford-AstraZeneca candidate. The agency also [started](#) a rolling review of a candidate from Johnson & Johnson.

The American Academy of Pediatrics [called](#) for vaccine manufacturers to include children in vaccine trials. Due to limited data, COVID-19 vaccines [may not be recommended](#) for children by the US CDC.

Updates on COVID-19 Therapeutics

The ANTICOV study, which involves a network of 13 African countries and global researchers, was [launched](#). It is an adaptive platform trial that is also the largest clinical trial of potential COVID-19 treatments in Africa. The study will test treatments among 2,000 to 3,000 persons with mild-to-moderate symptoms in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Sudan, and Uganda. It will include testing the HIV combination drug lopinavir-ritonavir and the malaria medicine hydroxychloroquine. ([The Guardian](#))

In the US, the Food and Drug Administration [granted](#) emergency authorization for the experimental antibody treatment from Regeneron Pharmaceuticals for individuals aged 12 and over who have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 and are at high risk for developing severe symptoms. The antibody cocktail is made up of casirivimab and imdevimab. ([New York Times](#)) Earlier this month, the agency [issued](#) emergency use authorization for the investigational monoclonal antibody therapy bamlanivimab from Eli Lilly, also for patients over age 12 who tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 viral testing and are at high risk for severe COVID-19 and/or hospitalization. ([BMJ](#))

- See also: [Doctors Deploy Antibody Drugs Against COVID-19 and Hope Effort's Worthwhile](#) (NPR)

Updates on Global Initiatives for Access and Delivery

UNICEF is [partnering](#) with Gavi and WHO to prepare for deployment of COVID-19 vaccines and vaccine supplies. It is working with 350 global airlines and freight providers to facilitate transport and delivery of nearly [2 billion](#) COVID-19 vaccines to 92 low- and middle-income countries next year. ([Devex](#))

- See also: [Launch and Scale Speedometer](#), a data and analyses tool mapping publicly available data on vaccine agreements between countries and pharmaceutical companies ([Duke Global Health Innovation Center](#))

The International Coalition of Medicines Regulatory Authorities (ICMRA) and the WHO [committed](#) to take actions to improve global regulatory alignment for therapeutics and vaccines against COVID-19 that are supported by robust scientific evidence. They also pledged working together to ensure equitable access to safe, effective and quality-assured medicines for COVID-19 treatment or prevention.

Over US \$2 billion [has been raised](#) for the COVID-19 Vaccines Advance Market Commitment (COVAX AMC) so far with contributions from governments, the private sector and philanthropic sources. The [COVAX Facility](#) now includes 94 higher-income countries that will be self-financing and 92 low- and middle-income countries that will be supported by the COVAX AMC.

ADAPTING HIV PROGRAMMES AND HEALTH SYSTEMS TO COVID-19

Maintaining the HIV response in a world shaped by COVID-19

28 November 2020, *The Lancet*

Study: Delay lab tests in low-risk HIV patients to minimize COVID-19 exposure

23 November 2020, *Healio*

This editorial highlighted how the HIV response is being adapted in the COVID-19 context and how these adaptations may help rejuvenate the HIV response. While in many countries, HIV services including prevention, testing and treatment were disrupted, there were also increases in home deliveries of medicines, multi-month ART delivery, and the use of digital platforms.

[A Tale of Two Jamaican Clinics during COVID-19](#)

3 November 2020, *UNAIDS*

HIV service providers in Jamaica are responding to new challenges caused by COVID-19 as well as the long-standing barriers in service delivery. In this brief, UNAIDS Country Director Manoela Manova speaks about these issues with providers at two treatment sites.

A poster presentation in IDWeek recommended that it may be beneficial to delay liver, renal and lipid testing in low-risk patients living with HIV to minimize their exposure to COVID-19. Current guidelines recommend periodic laboratory renal, liver and lipid testing in patients with HIV on ART.

[COVID-19 antibody testing for HIV positive people in the UK: HIV organisations reverse previous exclusion](#)

11 November 2020, HIV i-Base

Several organizations led by the British HIV Association (BHIVA) challenged a UK guideline excluding people living with HIV from getting a free COVID-19 antibody test. Due to their intervention noting the lack of evidence for this exclusion criteria, HIV and other immune-related conditions have now been removed.

SELECTED RESEARCH ON HIV AND COVID-19

[The interplay between HIV and COVID-19 summary of the data and responses to date](#)

11 November 2020, *Current Opinion in HIV and AIDS*

This review describes the evidence so far on the HIV and COVID-19 epidemics, including the impact of HIV on COVID-19 susceptibility and severe disease, the effect of the COVID-19 epidemic on HIV prevention and treatment, and the influence of the HIV epidemic on responses to COVID-19. Studies do not support a higher risk of severe COVID-19 among those living with HIV but the pandemic is threatening progress made in the fight against HIV.

[New pathogen, same disparities: Why COVID-19 and HIV remain prevalent in U.S. communities of colour and implications for ending the HIV epidemic](#)

28 October 2020, *Journal of the International AIDS Society*

This article discusses why communities of color in the US are at greater risk for both COVID-19 and HIV, and assesses challenges to the country's Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) Initiative after the pandemic. The authors cite racism and discrimination as a risk for COVID-19 as well as HIV, and calls for structural change to eliminate conditions that give rise to and maintain disparities.

[The COVID-19 pandemic as a catalyst for differentiated care models to end the HIV epidemic in the U.S. – applying lessons from high-burden settings](#)

5 November 2020, *AIDS*

The authors outline the role of differentiated service delivery (DSD), an HIV care model that combines aspects of facility- and community-based care and healthcare worker- or peer-led care processes that originated in sub-Saharan Africa. They describe its potential for improving the COVID-19 response in the US.

[HIV and COVID-19: Twin Epidemics](#)

30 October 2020, *Infectious Disease Special Edition*

This review article summarizes the literature through August 2020 on the intersection of the HIV and COVID-19 epidemics, including questions like: does HIV infection increase susceptibility to SARS-CoV-2 infection or severe outcomes? Does ART affect the risks of SARS-CoV-2 infection or worse outcomes? Are there any considerations for COVID-19 treatments in people living with HIV? Is the COVID-19 pandemic affecting HIV care and prevention?

[COVID-19 pandemic and continuum of care in people living with HIV: the experience of a hospital in Northern Italy](#)

4 November 2020, *BMC*

In this observational study from a hospital in Brescia, Italy, the percentage of missed clinic visits for those living with HIV increased, routine HIV testing decreased, and the distribution of ART decreased during the pandemic. The authors note the importance of new strategies, such as telephone interviews and telemedicine programs for improved continuity of HIV care. Women and immigrants were more likely to experience disrupted care.

[COVID-19 infection among people with HIV in New York City: A population-level analysis of linked surveillance data](#)

30 November 2020, *Clinical Infectious Diseases*

The researchers working with data from New York City described characteristics and outcomes of people living with HIV who were diagnosed with COVID-19 compared to people living with HIV in the city and people who were diagnosed with COVID-19. Compared to cases of COVID-19 overall, people living with HIV had more severe symptoms of COVID-19 and adverse outcomes. The researchers noted that this could be due to higher prevalence of other risk factors associated with poor COVID-19 outcomes, such as age and comorbidities.

COVID-19 AND IMPACTS ON CHILDREN

[COVID-19: A catastrophe for children in sub-Saharan Africa](#)

26 November 2020, *UNICEF*

A UNICEF analysis examined how the wellbeing of children in sub-Saharan Africa was affected by COVID-19 and other shocks, particularly among children already facing many challenges. The report presents evidence on cash transfers for children, families and economies.

See also: [5 ways COVID-19 has affected children in Sub-Saharan Africa](#) (World Economic Forum)

[Sweden Recommends Children of COVID Sufferers Should Stay at Home](#)

30 November 2020, *Financial Times*

Sweden's public health agency published new [recommendations](#) asking children who live with someone with a SARS-CoV-2 infection to stay at home, revising previous advice that they should go to school unlike adults who should quarantine. The agency has generally not advised restrictions for asymptomatic individuals.

<p>Child Marriages Are Up in the Pandemic. Here's How India Tries to Stop Them 5 November 2020, <i>NPR</i></p> <p>There are reports globally that the COVID-19 pandemic is increasing the number of child marriages. In the Maharashtra state in India, officials stopped 208 child marriages between April through August 2020 compared to 116 in the 12 months from April 2019 and March 2020.</p> <p>See also: <i>From Schoolboy to Tea Seller: Covid poverty forces India's children into work</i> (<i>The Guardian</i>)</p>	<p>Vulnerable Children in Lockdown 'National Concern' 30 November 2020, <i>BBC</i></p> <p>England's chief inspector of schools noted that with long absences from school, signs of child abuse may be missed, and more efforts are needed to find overlooked cases. There are also concerns about additional pressure on families of children with special educational needs.</p> <p>See also, video: Burnley: 'Children ripping bags open for food' during pandemic (<i>BBC</i>)</p>
---	--

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

<p>Turning the Tide: The fight to reclaim gains and accelerate progress for women and children 10 November 2020, <i>World Bank</i></p> <p>The blog comes out of a discussion organized by the GFF and held on the sidelines of the World Health Summit. Panelists highlighted a need to double down on efforts to protect gains and promote progress for women, children and adolescents.</p>	<p>We need these two policies to drive our recovery from COVID-19 17 November 2020, <i>World Economic Forum</i></p> <p>Director of HIV, Health and Development Group, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Mandeep Dhaliwal writes about the importance of temporary basic income and universal health coverage for COVID-19 recovery.</p>	<p>COVID crisis is threatening an HIV resurgence 16 November 2020, <i>NOW</i></p> <p>Laurie Edmiston, executive director of CATIE, highlights the importance of efficiently delivering HIV services during the pandemic to continue the progress made in the HIV response. This includes scaling up HIV self-testing and providing at-home PrEP services.</p>
<p>The pandemic is Triggering Another Disaster: Untreated diseases 19 November 2020, <i>The Washington Post</i></p> <p>This editorial notes the impact of the pandemic on other diseases, including HIV, tuberculosis, malaria and noncommunicable diseases. Lockdowns, transportation disruptions, reallocated resources, shortage of staff have all affected programmes for other diseases.</p>	<p>Why exciting results from vaccine research are just the beginning of efforts to end COVID-19 19 November 2020, <i>Devex</i></p> <p>AVAC Executive Director Mitchell Warren outlines lessons from the HIV response to argue that more than biomedical tools like vaccines are needed for COVID-19. For example, as with HIV, we need harm reduction approaches that reduce risks even if they cannot be eliminated.</p>	<p>COVID-19, Ebola, and HIV — Leveraging Lessons to Maximize Impact 5 November 2020, <i>The New England Journal of Medicine</i></p> <p>HIV researchers write about lessons from HIV and Ebola outbreaks for this pandemic; these include engaging communities to build trust, including well-designed clinical trials and a combination of interventions, and having multidisciplinary teams.</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>Prevailing against Pandemics by Putting People at the Centre 26 November 2020</p> <p>In this new report, UNAIDS calls on countries to make more investments in global pandemic responses and adopt a new set of bold, ambitious but achievable HIV targets.</p>	<p>Averting a Lost COVID Generation November 2020</p> <p>On World Children's Day, UNICEF released a six-point plan to respond, recover and reimagine a post-pandemic world for every child. It takes stock of the global impact of COVID-19 on children and young people. See: New York Times</p>	<p>Beyond Masks: Societal impacts of COVID-19 and accelerated solutions for children and adolescents November 2020</p> <p>This report from UNICEF Office of Research provides a review of the societal impacts of COVID-19 on children and adolescents along with a review of past health and economic shocks, and possible solutions for mitigating impact.</p>
<p>Challenges and Opportunities for Patients with HIV During COVID-19 VIDEO 20 November 2020</p> <p>On AJMC, experts discuss myths about HIV and COVID-19, explain which patients are at risk, and outline strategies to help reduce risks.</p>	<p>PEPFAR Technical Guidance in Context of COVID-19 Pandemic UPDATED 18 November 2020</p> <p>PEPFAR updated technical guidance highlights the feedback form for civil society organizations to comment on the guidance.</p>	<p>HIV/AIDS and SRHR in Asia Pacific RECORDING 23 November 2020</p> <p>At the Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Health Rights (APCRSHR10), the UNAIDS Regional Director spoke about solidarity, accountability and the intersection of HIV and COVID-19 (slides).</p>

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **7 December 2020:** The International AIDS Society (IAS) is hosting the next webinar in the COVID-19 and HIV webinar series – “Latest updates and guidance”. 13:30 CET >> [Register](#)
- **2 February 2021:** IAS announced its second COVID-19 virtual meeting focused on infection prevention ahead of HIV Research for Prevention Conference (HIVR4P). >> [More](#)

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