COVID-19 and HIV: Weekly Digest
1 May 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 AND THE HIV RESPONSE

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<th>Title</th>
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<td>South Africa’s HIV Failures Cost More Than 300,000 Lives. This Painful Past Is Helping in COVID-19 Fight. 29 April 2020, CNN</td>
<td>Sustained HIV and TB Care Good for COVID-19 Fight 30 April 2020, New Frame</td>
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<td>In South Africa, the COVID-19 response draws on the country’s history with the HIV epidemic. The response includes a strict lockdown as well as around 35,000 government and PEPFAR supported health workers conducting screening in communities.</td>
<td>As the pandemic grows in South Africa, experts are calling on the government to ensure tuberculosis (TB) and HIV screenings and treatment efforts are intensified. See also: High Percentage of HIV-Positive People Skipping Treatment over COVID-19 Fears</td>
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<td>Global experts speaking at International AIDS Society (IAS) webinars last week noted the challenges of HIV provision during the COVID-19 pandemic including the supply of antiretroviral therapy (ART) and needs of vulnerable populations. Another webinar discussion highlighted the impact of HIV clinic closures and the inequitable distribution of technology (MedPage Today).</td>
<td>A survey conducted by the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) found that in-person services in the UK for people seeking HIV testing, treatment and PrEP as well as other sexual health services drastically shrunk since the beginning of the pandemic.</td>
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<td>How COVID-19 Response Disrupted Health Services In Rural India 24 April 2020, Mint</td>
<td>As Coronavirus Bears Down, Zimbabwe’s HIV Crisis Worsens 26 April 2020, Global Press Journal</td>
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<td>Data from the Indian Ministry of Health suggest that the provision of health services declined in rural areas; among gaps in other services, HIV testing rates fell.</td>
<td>A report from Zimbabwe discusses fears of people living with HIV in the country. Existing gaps and challenges in HIV testing stand to be exacerbated by the pandemic.</td>
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### NOVEL CORONAVIRUS AND CHILDREN

Emerging reports of an inflammatory condition among children potentially related to SARS-CoV-2

On Sunday, doctors in the United Kingdom reported cases of children with abdominal pain, gastrointestinal symptoms and cardiac inflammation. This has been observed in children with confirmed Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) positive SARS-CoV-2 infection as well as children who are PCR negative. An alert issued by NHS England noted the “growing concern” on a coronavirus-related inflammatory syndrome in children and advised urgent treatment. The symptoms are similar to features of toxic shock syndrome and Kawasaki disease. See:

- At least 12 UK children have needed intensive care due to illness linked to Covid-19 (The Guardian, 27 Apr)

Clinicians in northern Italy soon reported extraordinary numbers of young children under age 9 with severe cases of Kawasaki disease, which is more commonly seen in Asia. This week, paediatric cases of inflammatory symptoms have been reported from at least six countries. Experts are investigating possible links between the coronavirus and these symptoms. To note, this syndrome is rare and most children with COVID-19 have mild symptoms. See:

- More cases of rare syndrome in children reported globally (The Guardian, 29 Apr)
- COVID-19 complication seen in children is ‘rare’, WHO says (Reuters, 29 Apr)
- Coronavirus & Kawasaki disease in children: It’s an intriguing but unproven link (The Conversation, 29 Apr)
- Coronavirus: ‘My son had symptoms of rare syndrome’ (BBC, 28 Apr)

Evidence on SARS-CoV-2 transmission among children is uncertain

Doctors are increasingly agreeing that children are less vulnerable to COVID-19, seeing fewer cases and hospitalizations due to the virus in this population. These data are a welcome sign for decision makers who are considering reopening schools as the first step in refreshing country economies. See:
• Consensus is emerging that children are less vulnerable to coronavirus (The Wall Street Journal, 27 Apr)
• Children unlikely to transmit coronavirus, says study cited in push to reopen schools (The Guardian, 26 Apr)

Meanwhile, a new paper (preprint) from the Institute of Virology at Charité in Germany reports no significant differences in SARS-CoV-2 viral loads between children and adults. The researchers noted that this means children may be as infectious as adults and advised caution in reopening schools. See:
• New reports on virus in kids fuel uncertainty on schools (Bloomberg, 30 Apr)

GLOBAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

Millions Had Risen Out of Poverty. Coronavirus Is Pulling Them Back
30 April 2020, The New York Times

In the wake of the pandemic, the world will see an increase in global poverty. The World Bank estimates that sub-Saharan Africa will see its first recession in 25 years and South Asia will likely experience its worst economic performance in 40 years.

ViV Healthcare set up a new GBP£3 million fund to support research for COVID-19 and HIV as well as to support community-based activities that address specific challenges faced by people living with HIV.

ViiV Healthcare announced £3m Fund to Study Impact of COVID19 on HIV Community
28 April 2020, PharmaTimes

‘Where are all our patients?: COVID phobia keeping people with serious heart symptoms away from ERs’
24 April 2020, STAT News

There is growing concern about the downstream impacts of COVID-19. Clinicians fear that patients are dying at home to avoid risking exposure to SARS-CoV-2 in hospitals.

Niger Reports New Polio Outbreak
24 April 2020, WHO Africa

Two children were infected by polio in Niger, signifying a new outbreak. WHO and partners had earlier announced that polio vaccination activities were halted until at least June 1 due to COVID-19. See also: Associated Press

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Multiple results from trials on remdesivir

Early results of a federal trial with 1063 patients hospitalized with advanced COVID-19 suggested that treatment with remdesivir can shorten the time to recovery, which averaged 11 days among those who received treatment compared to 15 days with placebo.

Meanwhile, a randomized, placebo-controlled trial in China was inconclusive about the benefits of remdesivir. There was no significant difference in time to clinical improvement or mortality at 28 days among hospitalized patients with severe COVID-19 in the treatment group versus the control. The results were published in The Lancet along with a commentary on the challenges of underpowered studies.

Gilead Sciences issued a press release with results from a Phase III clinical trial comparing the efficacy of 5-day and 10-day treatment courses of remdesivir. Both treatment courses had a similar time to recovery; there were no reports of comparisons with a control group.

See:
• Remdesivir Now ‘Standard of Care’ for COVID-19, Fauci Says (Medscape, 29 Apr)

Global momentum on a vaccine for SARS-CoV-2

UK Researchers Should Know by July If Coronavirus Vaccine Is Effective
30 April 2020, CNBC

A vaccine from the Jenner Institute and the Oxford Vaccine Group entered phase one trials last week. AstraZeneca representatives noted that they expect to know more about efficacy by July. See also: BBC video

Trump’s ‘Operation Warp Speed’ Aims to Rush Coronavirus Vaccine
29 April 2020, Bloomberg
The Trump administration is pulling together pharmaceutical companies, government agencies and the military to accelerate vaccine development with a goal of having 300 million doses of a vaccine by January.

US Stays Away as World Leaders Agree Action on COVID-19 Vaccine
24 April 2020, The Guardian
Global leaders with the WHO pledged to accelerate cooperation on COVID-19 vaccine development. The European Commission will host a virtual summit on May 4 to raise EUR8 billion for the initiative.

Prime Minister Announces New Support For COVID-19 Medical Research and Vaccine Development
23 April 2020, Office of the Prime Minister
The Government of Canada announced more than CA$1 billion for a COVID-19 medical research strategy.

EDITORIAILS AND OPINIONS

The Fight against AIDS Has Shaped How Potential COVID-19 Drugs Will Reach Patients
29 April 2020, The Washington Post

The legacy of HIV/AIDS activism has shaped access to experimental drugs and allowed them to reach COVID-19

Three Lessons from Past Epidemics that Will Help India Fight COVID-19
29 April 2020, The Wire

India’s Former Union Secretary of Health K. Sujatha Rao picks lessons from the HIV epidemic for the COVID-19 response: do not panic, ensure

Africa’s COVID-19 Response Is a Glimpse of How Things Could Be Different
30 April 2020, Financial Times

Countries in Africa, in spite of budgetary constraints, have been well coordinated and effective. While
### RECENT RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

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<tr>
<td>Antibody Responses To SARS-CoV-2 In Patients With COVID-19</td>
<td>29 April 2020, Nature Medicine</td>
<td>This study suggests people exposed to SARS-CoV-2 show an antibody response, supporting more serological testing. Researchers noted that all COVID-19 patients in the study tested positive for antiviral immunoglobulin-G (IgG) within 19 days of symptom onset.</td>
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<td>Atypical Presentation Of COVID-19 in Young Infants</td>
<td>27 April 2020, The Lancet</td>
<td>In a new report from France about five infants (aged &lt;3 months) with COVID-19, the authors noted neurologic symptoms at admission among four of them. They recommend that infants younger than 3 months with isolated fever be tested for SARS-CoV-2 and monitored.</td>
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<td>Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) Infection in Children and Adolescents: A systematic review</td>
<td>22 April 2020, JAMA Pediatrics</td>
<td>In this systematic review of 18 studies with 1065 participants, most children with SARS-CoV-2 infection presented with mild symptoms and recovered within one to two weeks. Symptomatic children generally only required supportive care.</td>
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<td>Presenting Characteristics, Comorbidities, and Outcomes Among 5700 Patients Hospitalized With COVID-19 in the New York City Area</td>
<td>22 April 2020, JAMA</td>
<td>In this case series with 5700 patients hospitalized with COVID-19 in the New York City area, relatively few were living with HIV (0.8%). The most common comorbidities were hypertension, obesity and diabetes.</td>
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### AROUND THE UNITED NATIONS

- The WHO announced the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, a new global collaboration that aims to speed global research and production efforts for critical COVID-19 drugs, tests, and vaccines. (WHO)
- The new 'A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19' sets out strategies to address the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN’s socio-economic recovery efforts will be led by UNDP.
- Greta Thunberg and non-governmental organization Human Act launched a child rights campaign to support UNICEF’s efforts in the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes protecting children from food shortages, strained healthcare systems, violence and lost education. (UNICEF and Reuters)
- According to new data from UNFPA, the number of women and girls who face violence, child marriages, unintended pregnancies and other harmful practice is set to skyrocket due to the pandemic. (UN News)
- UNAIDS featured the work of associations of people living with HIV supporting HIV treatment adherence during the COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan. (UNAIDS)
- The Global Financing Facility (GFF) warned of a secondary global health crisis, especially in low- and lower-middle income countries, due to disruptions in access to health and nutrition services. (GFF)
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**

| Blog: Assessing the Needs of Young Key Populations During COVID-19 Outbreak In Asia and The Pacific | Living Under Lockdown: Girls and COVID-19 | Tweet: 8 Ways Governments Can Support Children Living with HIV During the Pandemic |
| 30 April 2020 | 30 April 2020 | 30 April 2020 |
| This post shares preliminary findings of the survey by the Interagency Task Team on Young Key Populations (YKPs) in Asia and the Pacific. | A report by Plan International highlights the potential long-lasting consequences of abuse, neglect, fear and hunger for girls worldwide in the context of COVID-19. | Social media graphics from UNICEF’s HIV programme show how governments can support children living with HIV during the pandemic. |

| UPDATED 29 April 2020 | 29 April 2020 | UPDATED 21 April 2020 |
| This week’s updates can be found in the sections on telehealth, adolescents living with HIV, and faith and community organizations. | Experts from FHI360 spotlight digital response strategies that can be used to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on providing HIV services. | The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provided updated guidance for people living with HIV and their health care providers regarding COVID-19. |

| The National AIDS Control Programme in Tanzania released guidelines for providers to continue HIV services during the pandemic. | This memo from Eswatini’s Director of Health Services to health facilities includes guidelines on continuing to provide HIV care and treatment. | PODCAST 27 April 2020 |
| | 22 April 2020 | UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima spoke of the lessons we can learn from the HIV/AIDS pandemic in this podcast with the Oxford Union. |

| COVID-19 and Global Inequality | Updates on Policy and Practice Adaptations from Ministries of Health (Eswatini and Liberia) | Test, test, test: COVID-19 and HIV testing updates |
| WEBINAR 28 April 2020 | WEBINAR 28 April 2020 | WEBINAR 30 April 2020 |
| In this webinar from The New School and Health Policy Watch, global health leaders discussed how COVID-19 exposed inequalities in access to medical care, employment and countries’ abilities to protect their citizens. | The International Treatment Preparedness Coalition in collaboration, ICAP at Columbia University and the DSD Initiative hosted a discussion on policy changes and health system adaptations in Eswatini and Liberia. | This webinar from the International AIDS Society included discussions on global updates on COVID-19 testing, strategies for HIV testing and treatment and lessons learned from the pandemic thus far. |

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- 5 May 2020: The HIV Coverage, Quality, and Impact Network (CQUN) is hosting a discussion on a impact of COVID-19 on the provision of family planning services. 8am ET | 2pm SAST >> More
- 6 May 2020: The International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC) is hosting a virtual pre-conference for Adherence 2020 on continuity of HIV care during COVID-19. 12pm ET | 6pm SAST >> More

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