

## AFRO WEEKLY COVID-19 LITERATURE UPDATE

**2021/09/08-2021/09/14**

Prepared by AFRO COVID-19 IMST through  
its information management cell, together with  
DAK team of the ARD's office

**Issue No. 3**

Due to the abundance of information and literature produced on COVID-19 in the world in general and in Africa in particular, the WHO Regional Office for Africa is publishing a weekly "Weekly COVID Literature Update" to highlight the most important literature. Each week we will select some articles per topic as well as reports and grey literature when available.

The aim is to provide an easy-to-read summary of each publication. This Bulletin is organised according to several categories of interest.

The publications shared are the result of a bibliographic research work carried out regularly on several online information sources with a major search strategy "COVID-19 AND Africa" in combination with the following keywords: **epidemiology ( response activities OR hygiene practices OR social distancing OR case management), vaccination, public perceptions , other diseases and other sectors**. For this issue, the list of information sources is as follows: WHO Covid-19 database, PubMed, BioMed Central, Lancet (including sister journals), One library, African Index Medicus, Cochrane, Nature (including sister journals), Science (including sister journals), Bulletin of WHO, PLOS, Google scholar.

The list is subject to change and kindly note that the choice of the publications to be included in this update is subjective.

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En raison de l'abondance d'informations et de littérature produites sur la COVID-19 dans le monde en général et en Afrique en particulier, le Bureau régional de l'OMS pour l'Afrique publie chaque semaine "Weekly COVID Literature Update" pour mettre en évidence la littérature la plus importante. Chaque semaine, nous sélectionnerons quelques articles par sujet ainsi que les rapports et la littérature grise quand c'est disponible.

L'objectif est de fournir un résumé facile à lire de chaque publication. Ce bulletin est organisé suivant plusieurs catégories d'intérêt.

Les publications partagées sont le résultat d'un travail de recherche bibliographique effectué régulièrement sur plusieurs sources d'information en ligne avec une comme stratégie de recherche majeure "COVID-19 ET Afrique" combinés aux mots clés suivants : **epidemiology ( response activities OR hygiene practices OR social distancing OR case management), vaccination, public perceptions , other diseases and other sectors**. Pour ce numéro, la liste des sources d'information utilisées est la suivante : WHO Covid-19 database, PubMed, BioMed Central, Lancet (including sister journals), One library, African Index Medicus, Cochrane, Nature (including sister journals), Science (including sister journals), Bulletin of WHO, PLOS, Google scholar. Cette liste est susceptible d'être modifiée. Veuillez noter que le choix des publications à inclure dans cette mise à jour est subjectif.

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Devido à abundância de informação e literatura produzida sobre a COVID-19 no mundo em geral e em África em particular, o Escritório Regional da OMS para África está a publicar semanalmente uma "Weekly COVID Literature Update" para destacar a literatura mais importante. Cada semana iremos seleccionar alguns artigos por tópico, bem como relatórios e literatura cinzenta, quando disponível.

O objectivo é fornecer um resumo de fácil leitura de cada publicação. Este boletim está organizado de acordo com várias categorias de interesse.

As publicações partilhadas são o resultado de um trabalho de pesquisa bibliográfica realizado regularmente em várias fontes de informação em linha com uma grande estratégia de pesquisa "COVID-19 E África" em combinação com as seguintes palavras-chave: **epidemiology ( response activities OR hygiene practices OR social distancing OR case management), vaccination, public perceptions , other diseases and other sectors**. Para esta edição, a lista de fontes de informação é a seguinte: WHO Covid-19 database, PubMed, BioMed Central, Lancet (including sister journals), One library, African Index Medicus, Cochrane, Nature (including sister journals), Science (including sister journals), Bulletin of WHO, PLOS, Google scholar.

A lista está sujeita a alterações e note-se que a escolha das publicações a serem incluídas nesta actualização é subjectiva.

# Contents

## **A. COVID-19 epidemiology / surveillance (trends / distribution)**

1. [Covid-19 in West & East Africa, a Geographical Weighted Regression Exploration with <http://mygeoffice.org/>](#)
2. [A year of genomic surveillance reveals how the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic unfolded in Africa](#)
3. [COVID-19 epidemiological, sociological and anthropological investigation: study protocol for a multidisciplinary mixed methods research in Burkina Faso.](#)
4. [Genomic-informed pathogen surveillance in Africa: opportunities and challenges.](#)
5. [The first eight months of COVID-19 pandemic in three West African countries: leveraging lessons learned from responses to the 2014-2016 Ebola virus disease outbreak](#)

## **B. COVID-19 response activities (hygiene practices, social distancing, case management)**

1. [Impact of the Covid-19 epidemic and related social distancing regulations on social contact and SARS-CoV-2 transmission potential in rural South Africa: analysis of repeated cross-sectional surveys](#)
2. [African National Public Health Institutes Responses to COVID-19: Innovations, Systems Changes, and Challenges](#)
3. [Social distancing and preventive practices of government employees in response to COVID-19 in Ethiopia](#)

## **C. COVID-19 vaccination**

1. [CORONAVIRUS: Accelerating Vaccine Access](#)
2. [Covid Vaccine Donations](#)

## **D. COVID-19 public perceptions and effects**

1. [Facing COVID-19 in times of armed conflicts in Northern and Central regions of Mozambique](#)
2. [Demystifying the COVID-19 Infodemic: Conspiracies, Context, and the Agency of Users](#)
3. [Effect of a social media-based counselling intervention in countering fake news on COVID-19 vaccine in Nigeria](#)
4. [Pandemic pains to Instagram gains! COVID-19 perceptions effects on behaviours towards fashion brands on Instagram in Sub-Saharan Africa: Tech-native vs non-native generations](#)

## **E. COVID-19 effects on other diseases and sectors**

1. [Clinical Characteristics and Histopathology of Coronavirus Disease 2019-Related Deaths in African Children.](#)
2. [Social, economic, and health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on adolescents retained in or recently disengaged from HIV care in Kenya](#)
3. [Viral hepatitis amidst COVID-19 in Africa: Implications and Recommendations](#)

### A. COVID-19 EPIDEMIOLOGY/ SURVEILLANCE (trends/ distribution)

**Title:** Covid-19 in West & East Africa, a Geographical Weighted Regression Exploration with <http://mygeooffice.org/>

**Journal:** Journal of Geoscience and Environment Protection

**Publish Date:** September 2021

**URL:** [https://www.scirp.org/pdf/gep\\_2021090715331422.pdf](https://www.scirp.org/pdf/gep_2021090715331422.pdf)

**Abstract:**

Understanding the dynamics that affect the spread of Covid-19 is critical for the development of government measures to stop and reverse this nowadays disease propagation. Like in any epidemiological study, it is essential to analyze the spatial data to account for the inherent spatial heterogeneity within the data (spatial autocorrelation). This paper uses Geographically Weighted Regression (GWR) to identify the factors that influence the outbreak of Covid-19 in Western and Eastern countries of Africa. The analyses include traditional linear regression (including descriptive statistics, hierarchical clustering and correlations were not forgotten either) to reveal the importance of eight risk factors (population density, median age, aged over 65 years, GDP per capita, cardiovascular death rates, diabetes prevalence, female and male smokers) regarding Covid-19 dissemination. It is believed that this is the first attempt to explore possible causes associated with the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in these disadvantage countries, where some intriguing clues are presented for further research such as the positive relationship between the financial purchase power of nations and the total number of infected people or the smoker's gender impact on Covid-19.

**Title:** A year of genomic surveillance reveals how the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic unfolded in Africa

**Journal:** Science

**Publish Date:** September 2021

**URL:** <https://www.science.org/doi/epdf/10.1126/science.abj4336>

**Abstract:**

The progression of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in Africa has so far been heterogeneous and the full impact is not yet well understood. Here, we describe the genomic epidemiology using a dataset of 8746 genomes from 33

African countries and two overseas territories. We show that the epidemics in most countries were initiated by importations predominantly from Europe, which diminished following the early introduction of international travel restrictions. As the pandemic progressed, ongoing transmission in many countries and increasing mobility led to the emergence and spread within the continent of many variants of concern and interest, such as B.1.351, B.1.525, A.23.1 and C.1.1. Although distorted by low sampling numbers and blind spots, the findings highlight that Africa must not be left behind in the global pandemic response, otherwise it could become a source for new variants.

**Title:** COVID-19 epidemiological, sociological and anthropological investigation: study protocol for a multidisciplinary mixed methods research in Burkina Faso.

**Journal:** BMC Infectious Diseases

**Publish Date:** 3 September 2021

**URL:** <https://dx.doi.org/10.1186/s12879-021-06543-4>

**Abstract:**

#### **BACKGROUND:**

The world has high hopes of vaccination against COVID-19 to protect the population, boost economies and return to normal life. Vaccination programmes are being rolled out in high income countries, but the pandemic continues to progress in many low-and middle-income countries (LMICs) despite implementation of strict hygiene measures. We aim to present a comprehensive research protocol that will generate epidemiological, sociological and anthropological data about the COVID-19 epidemic in Burkina Faso, a landlocked country in West Africa with scarce resources.

#### **METHODS:**

We will perform a multidisciplinary research using mixed methods in the two main cities in Burkina Faso (Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso). Data will be collected in the general population and in COVID-19 patients, caregivers and health care professionals in reference care centers (i) to determine cumulative incidence of SARS-CoV-2 infection in the Burkinabe population using blood samples collected from randomly selected households according to the WHO-recommended protocol; (ii) develop a score to predict severe complications of COVID-19 in persons infected with SARS-CoV-2 using retrospective and prospective data; (iii) perform semi-structured interviews and direct observation on site, to describe and analyze the healthcare pathways and experiences of patients with COVID-19 attending reference care centers, and

to identify the perceptions, acceptability and application of preventive strategies among the population.

## **DISCUSSION:**

This study will generate comprehensive data that will contribute to improving COVID-19 response strategies in Burkina Faso. The lessons learned from the management of this epidemic may serve as examples to the country authorities to better design preventive strategies in the case of future epidemics or pandemics. The protocol was approved by the Ministry for Health (N° 2020-00952/MS/CAB/INSP/CM) and the Health Research Ethics Committee in Burkina Faso (N° 2020-8-140).

**Title:** Genomic-informed pathogen surveillance in Africa: opportunities and challenges.

**Journal:** Lancet Infectious Diseases

**Publish Date:** September 2021

**URL:** [https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099\(20\)30939-7](https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099(20)30939-7)

## **Abstract:**

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to incorporate pathogen genomics for enhanced disease surveillance and outbreak management in Africa. The genomics of SARS-CoV-2 has been instrumental to the timely development of diagnostics and vaccines and in elucidating transmission dynamics. Global disease control programmes, including those for tuberculosis, malaria, HIV, foodborne pathogens, and antimicrobial resistance, also recommend genomics-based surveillance as an integral strategy towards control and elimination of these diseases. Despite the potential benefits, capacity remains low for many public health programmes in Africa. The COVID-19 pandemic presents an opportunity to reassess and strengthen surveillance systems and potentially integrate emerging technologies for preparedness of future epidemics and control of endemic diseases. We discuss opportunities and challenges for integrating pathogen genomics into public health surveillance systems in Africa. Improving accessibility through the creation of functional continent-wide networks, building multipathogen sequencing cores, training a critical mass of local experts, development of standards and policies to facilitate best practices for data sharing, and establishing a community of practice of genomics experts are all needed to use genomics for improved disease surveillance in Africa. Coordination and leadership are also crucial, which the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention seeks to provide through its institute for pathogen genomics.



**Title:** The first eight months of COVID-19 pandemic in three West African countries: leveraging lessons learned from responses to the 2014-2016 Ebola virus disease outbreak

**Journal:** Epidemiology and Infection

**Publish Date:** 8 September 2021

**URL:** <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0950268821002053>

**Abstract:**

Experience gained from responding to major outbreaks may have influenced the early COVID-19 pandemic response in several countries across Africa. We retrospectively assessed whether Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, the three West African countries at the epicentre of the 2014-2016 Ebola virus disease outbreak, leveraged the lessons learned in responding to COVID-19 following the World Health Organization's declaration of a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC). We found relatively lower incidence rates across the three countries compared to many parts of the globe. Time to case reporting and laboratory confirmation also varied, with Guinea and Liberia reporting significant delays compared to Sierra Leone. Most of the selected readiness measures were instituted before confirmation of the first case and response measures were initiated rapidly after the outbreak confirmation. We conclude that the rapid readiness and response measures instituted by the three countries can be attributed to their lessons learned from the devastating Ebola outbreak, although persistent health systems weaknesses and the unique nature of COVID-19 continue to challenge control efforts.

**B. COVID-19 RESPONSE ACTIVITIES**  
(hygiene practices, social distancing, case management)

**Title:** Impact of the Covid-19 epidemic and related social distancing regulations on social contact and SARS-CoV-2 transmission potential in rural South Africa: analysis of repeated cross-sectional surveys

**Journal:** BMC Infectious Diseases

**Publish Date:** 8 September 2021

**URL:** <https://bmcinfectdis.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s12879-021-06604-8.pdf>

**Abstract:**

**Background**



South Africa implemented rapid and strict physical distancing regulations to minimize SARS-CoV-2 epidemic spread. Evidence on the impact of such measures on interpersonal contact in rural and lower-income settings is limited.

### **Methods**

We compared population-representative social contact surveys conducted in the same rural KwaZulu-Natal location once in 2019 and twice in mid-2020. Respondents reported characteristics of physical and conversational ('close interaction') contacts over 24 hours. We built age-mixing matrices and estimated the proportional change in the SARS-CoV-2 reproduction number ( $R_0$ ). Respondents also reported counts of others present at locations visited and transport used, from which we evaluated change in potential exposure to airborne infection due to shared indoor space ('shared air').

### **Results**

Respondents in March–December 2019 ( $n = 1704$ ) reported a mean of 7.4 close interaction contacts and 196 shared air person-hours beyond their homes. Respondents in June–July 2020 ( $n = 216$ ), as the epidemic peaked locally, reported 4.1 close interaction contacts and 21 shared air person-hours outside their home, with significant declines in others' homes and public spaces. Adults aged over 50 had fewer close contacts with others over 50, but little change in contact with 15–29 year olds, reflecting ongoing contact within multigenerational households. We estimate potential  $R_0$  fell by 42% (95% plausible range 14–59%) between 2019 and June–July 2020.

### **Conclusions**

Extra-household social contact fell substantially following imposition of Covid-19 distancing regulations in rural South Africa. Ongoing contact within intergenerational households highlighted a potential limitation of social distancing measures in protecting older adults.

**Title:** African National Public Health Institutes Responses to COVID-19: Innovations, Systems Changes, and Challenges

**Journal:**

**Publish Date:** September 2021

**URL:** <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/reader/10.1089/hs.2021.0094>

**Abstract:**

National public health institutes (NPHIs)—science-based governmental agencies typically part of, or closely aligned with, ministries of health—have played a critical part in many countries' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through listening sessions with NPHI leadership, we captured the experiences of NPHIs in Africa. Our research was further supplemented by a review of the literature. To address issues related to COVID-19, NPHIs in Africa developed

a variety of innovative approaches, such as working with the private sector to procure and manage vital supplies and address key information needs. Creative uses of technology, including virtual training and messaging from drones, contributed to sharing information and battling misinformation. Positive impacts of the pandemic response include increased laboratory capacity in many countries, modernized surveillance systems, and strengthened public–private partnerships; much of this enhanced capacity is expected to persist beyond the pandemic. However, several challenges remain, including the lack of staff trained in areas like bioinformatics (essential for genomic analysis) and the need for sustained relationships and data sharing between NPHIs and agencies not traditionally considered public health (eg, those related to border crossings), as well as the impact of the pandemic on prevention and control of non-COVID-19 conditions—both infectious and noncommunicable. Participants in the listening sessions also highlighted concerns about inequities in access to, and quality of, the public health services and clinical care with resultant disproportionate impact of the pandemic on certain populations. COVID-19 responses and challenges highlight the need for continued investment to strengthen NPHIs and public health infrastructure to address longstanding deficiencies and ensure preparedness for the next public health crisis.

**Title:** Social distancing and preventive practices of government employees in response to COVID-19 in Ethiopia

**Journal:** Plos One

**Publish Date:** 7 September 2021

**URL:**

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0257112&type=printable>

**Abstract:**

Public health and social interventions are critical to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Ethiopia has implemented a variety of public health and social measures to control the pandemic. This study aimed to assess social distancing and public health preventive practices of government employees in response to COVID-19. A cross-sectional study was conducted among 1,573 government employees selected from 46 public institutions located in Addis Ababa. Data were collected from 8<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> June 2020 using a paper-based self-administered questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS version 23.0. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data. Binary logistic regression analyses were used to identify factors associated with outcome variables (perceived effectiveness of facemask wearing to

prevent coronavirus infection, and COVID-19 testing). Majority of the participants reported facemask wearing (96%), avoiding close contact with people including handshaking (94.8%), consistently followed government recommendations (95.6%), frequent handwashing (94.5%), practiced physical distancing (89.5%), avoided mass gatherings and crowded places (88.1%), restricting movement and travelling (71.8%), and stayed home (35.6%). More than 80% of the participants perceived that consistently wearing a facemask is highly effective in preventing coronavirus infection. Respondents from Oromia perceived less about the effectiveness of wearing facemask in preventing coronavirus infection (adjusted OR = 0.27, 95% CI:0.17–0.45). About 19% of the respondents reported that they had ever tested for COVID-19. Respondents between 40–49 years old (adjusted OR = 0.41, 95% CI:0.22–0.76) and 50–66 years (adjusted OR = 0.43, 95% CI:0.19–0.95) were less likely tested for coronavirus than the younger age groups. Similarly, respondents from Oromia were less likely to test for coronavirus (adjusted OR = 0.26, 95% CI:0.12–0.56) than those from national level. Participants who were sure about the availability of COVID-19 testing were more likely to test for coronavirus. About 57% of the respondents perceived that the policy measures in response to the pandemic were inadequate. The findings showed higher social distancing and preventive practices among the government employees in response to COVID-19. Rules and regulations imposed by the government should be enforced and people should properly apply wearing facemasks, frequent handwashing, social and physical distancing measures as a comprehensive package of COVID-19 prevention and control strategies.

### C. COVID-19 VACCINATION

**Title:** CORONAVIRUS: Accelerating Vaccine Access

**Journal:** Africa Research Bulletin

**Publish Date:** 07 September 2021

**URL:** <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1467-6346.2021.10139.x>

**Title:** Covid Vaccine Donations

**Journal :** Africa Research Bulletin

**Publish Date:** 07 September 2021

**URL:** <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1467-6346.2021.10140.x>

## D. COVID-19 PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS AND EFFECTS

**Title:** [Facing COVID-19 in times of armed conflicts in Northern and Central regions of Mozambique](#)

**Journal:** Journal of Public Health Policy

**Publish Date:** 8 September 2021

**URL:**

[https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8424159/pdf/41271\\_2021\\_Article\\_300.pdf](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8424159/pdf/41271_2021_Article_300.pdf)

**Title:** Demystifying the COVID-19 Infodemic: Conspiracies, Context, and the Agency of Users

**Journal:** Social Media + Society

**Publish date:** 11 September 2021

**URL:** [10.1177\\_20563051211044233.pdf \(PDF, 2Mb\)](https://jms.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/20563051211044233)

**Abstract:**

This article presents new empirical insights into what people do with conspiracy theories during crises. By suppressing the impulse to distinguish between truth and falsehood, which has characterized most scholarship on the COVID-19 “infodemic,” and engaging with claims surrounding two popular COVID-19 conspiracies—on 5G and on Bill Gates—in South Africa and Nigeria, we illustrate how conspiracies morph as they interact with different socio-political contexts. Drawing on a mixed-method analysis of more than 6 million tweets, we examine how, in each country, conspiracies have uniquely intersected with longer-term discourses and political projects. In Nigeria, the two conspiracies were both seized as opportunities to extend criticism to the ruling party. In South Africa, they produced distinctive responses: while the 5G conspiracy had limited buy-in, the Gates conspiracy resonated with deep-rooted resentment toward the West, corporate interests, and what is seen as a paternalistic attitude of some external actors toward Africa. These findings stress the importance of taking conspiracy theories seriously, rather than dismissing them simply as negative externalities of digital ecosystems. Situating conspiracies in specific dynamics of trust and mistrust can make an important difference when designing responses that are not limited to broadcasting truthful information, but can also enable interventions that account for deeply rooted

sentiments of suspicion toward specific issues and actors, which can vary significantly across communities.

**Title:** Effect of a social media-based counselling intervention in countering fake news on COVID-19 vaccine in Nigeria

**Journal:** *Health Promotion International*

**Publish date:** September 12, 2021

**URL:** <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daab140>

**Abstract:**

The aim of this study was to understand the impact of counselling in countering fake news-related COVID-19 vaccine. We conducted two separate experiments. In the first experiment, we exposed the treatment group to fake news on COVID-19 vaccine through a WhatsApp group chat while the control group was not. We then tested the effectiveness of such fake news on their perception. In our second experiment, we exposed the treatment group to a social media-based counselling intervention wherein we attempted to counter the earlier fake news on COVID-19 vaccine which they were exposed to. We found that respondents who were exposed to fake news reported greater negative perception about COVID-19 vaccine than their counterparts in the control group. We also we found that as a result of the counselling intervention, the respondents in the treatment group reported more positive perception regarding COVID-19 vaccine while their counterparts in the control group who were earlier exposed to fake news on COVID-19 did not significantly change their perception. This study has highlighted the importance of counselling in countering fake news within the context of health promotion. This approach is yet to receive significant attention in literature, especially from developing countries.

**Title:** Pandemic pains to Instagram gains! COVID-19 perceptions effects on behaviours towards fashion brands on Instagram in Sub-Saharan Africa: Tech-native vs non-native generations

**Journal:** *Journal of Marketing Communications*

**Publish date:** 09 Sep 2021

**URL:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2021.1971282>

**Abstract:**

This study represents a novel attempt to investigate the cascading effects of COVID-19 perceptions onto behavioural patterns towards fashion brands on Instagram and across two generations tech-native vs tech non-native) in a

Sub-Saharan African context. We drew our study on a sample of 338 Instagram users that experienced fashion brands on Instagram in two Sub-Saharan African countries: Uganda and Nigeria. We used partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to test the hypothetical model. We found that COVID-19 perception positively predicted enjoyment and usefulness, leading to more satisfaction with fashion brand accounts on Instagram and hence greater intention to follow and recommend those accounts. Finally, running a multigroup analysis (MGA), we found the effects of COVID-19 perceptions pronounced into both intentions to follow and intention to recommend via the sequence of mediators: enjoyment and satisfaction were only valid amongst the tech-native generational cohort. Our research suggested a new generational categorisation based on technology nativity – offering a new direction of generational studies in digital marketing communications.

## **E. COVID-19 EFFECTS ON OTHER DISEASES AND SECTORS**

**Title:** Clinical Characteristics and Histopathology of Coronavirus Disease 2019-Related Deaths in African Children.

**Journal:** Pediatric Infectious Disease Journal

**Publish Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021

**URL:** <https://dx.doi.org/10.1097/INF.0000000000003227>

**Abstract:**

### **BACKGROUND:**

Globally, very few childhood deaths have been attributed to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). We evaluated clinical, microbiologic and postmortem histopathologic findings in childhood deaths in whom severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) was identified antemortem or postmortem.

### **METHODS:**

Surveillance of childhood deaths was ongoing during the initial COVID-19 outbreak in South Africa from April 14, 2020, to August 31, 2020. All children hospitalized during this time had a SARS-CoV-2 test done as part of standard of care. Postmortem sampling included minimally invasive tissue sampling (MITS) of lung, liver and heart tissue; blood and lung samples for bacterial culture and molecular detection of viruses (including SARS-CoV-2) and bacteria. The cause of death attribution was undertaken by a multidisciplinary



team and reported using World Health Organization framework for cause of death attribution.

### **RESULTS:**

SARS-CoV-2 was identified on antemortem and/or postmortem sampling in 11.7% (20/171) of deceased children, including 13.2% (12/91) in whom MITS was done. Eighteen (90%) of 20 deaths with SARS-CoV-2 infection were <12 months age. COVID-19 was attributed in the causal pathway to death in 91.7% (11/12) and 87.5% (7/8) cases with and without MITS, respectively. Lung histopathologic features in COVID-19-related deaths included diffuse alveolar damage (n = 6, 54.5%), type 2 pneumocyte proliferation (n = 6, 54.5%) and hyaline membrane formation (n = 5, 36.4%). Culture-confirmed invasive bacterial disease was evident in 54.5% (6/11) of COVID-19 attributed deaths investigated with MITS.

### **CONCLUSIONS:**

COVID-19 was in the causal pathway of 10.5% (18/171) of all childhood deaths under surveillance. The postmortem histopathologic features in fatal COVID-19 cases in children were consistent with reports on COVID-19 deaths in adults; although there was a high prevalence of invasive bacterial disease in the children.

**Title:** Social, economic, and health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on adolescents retained in or recently disengaged from HIV care in Kenya

**Journal:** PLoS One

**Publish Date:** 10 September 2021

**URL:**<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8432853/pdf/pone.0257210.pdf>

### **Abstract**

#### **Introduction**

Adolescents living with HIV (ALHIV, ages 10–19) experience complex challenges to adhere to antiretroviral therapy (ART) and remain in care, and may be vulnerable to wide-scale disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. We assessed for a range of effects of the pandemic on ALHIV in western Kenya, and whether effects were greater for ALHIV with recent histories of being lost to program (LTP).

#### **Methods**

ALHIV were recruited from an ongoing prospective study at 3 sites in western Kenya. The parent study enrolled participants from February 2019–September 2020, into groups of ALHIV either 1) retained in care or 2) LTP and traced in the community. Phone interviews from July 2020–January 2021 assessed effects of the pandemic on financial and food security, healthcare access and



behaviors, and mental health. Responses were compared among the parent study groups.

### **Results**

Phone surveys were completed with 334 ALHIV or their caregivers, including 275/308 (89.3%) in the retained group and 59/70 (84.3%) among those LTP at initial enrollment. During the pandemic, a greater proportion of LTP adolescents were no longer engaged in school (45.8% vs. 36.4%,  $p = 0.017$ ). Over a third (120, 35.9%) of adolescents reported lost income for someone they relied on. In total, 135 (40.4%) did not have enough food either some (121, 36.2%) or most (14, 4.2%) of the time. More LTP adolescents (4/59, 6.8% vs. 2/275, 0.7%,  $p = 0.010$ ) reported increased difficulties refilling ART. Adolescent PHQ-2 and GAD-2 scores were  $\geq 3$  for 5.6% and 5.2%, respectively.

### **Conclusions**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating socioeconomic effects for Kenyan ALHIV and their households. ALHIV with recent care disengagement may be especially vulnerable. Meanwhile, sustained ART access and adherence potentially signal resilience and strengths of ALHIV and their care programs. Findings from this survey indicate the critical need for support to ALHIV during this crisis.

**Title:** Viral hepatitis amidst COVID-19 in Africa: Implications and Recommendations

**Journal:** Journal of Medical Virology

**Publish Date:** 10 September 2021

**URL:** <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/jmv.27330>

### **Abstract:**

Hepatitis, a significant cause of mortality worldwide, results in around 1.34 million deaths each year globally. Africa is not exempt from the plague of Hepatitis. Around 100 million estimated individuals are infected with Hepatitis B (HBV) or C (HCV). Egypt has the highest prevalence cases of Hepatitis followed by Cameroon and Burundi. The continent is severely affected by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the virus has added additional burden on the already fragile continent. With the pandemic, it is presumable that Hepatitis like other viral diseases will pose a threat to collapsing healthcare system. Therefore, for Africa to become more resilient in the face of such menaces, including Hepatitis, further prevention policies are required to be implemented