

COVID-19 Scientific and Public Health Policy Update¹ – (23 June 2020)

In addition to our Weekly Outbreak Brief on the spread of COVID-19 and the actions that Africa CDC is taking to help African Union Member States. Africa CDC shares a weekly brief detailing the latest developments in scientific knowledge and public health policy from around the world, as well as updates to the latest guidance from WHO and other public health agencies. Contents of this document are not intended to serve as recommendations from the Africa CDC; rather, it is a summary of the scientific information available in the public space to Member States. It is important to note that the outbreak is evolving rapidly and that the nature of this information will continue to change. We will provide regular updates to ensure Member States are informed of the most critical developments in these areas.

A. Executive summary

- A study comparing the performance of BIOCREDIT COVID-19 antibody test, comparing it with RT-PCR, results indicate rapid antigen detection (RAD) was 103 fold less sensitive than viral culture while RAD was 105 fold less sensitive than RT-PCR.
- A randomized clinical trial reported on the clinical outcome of 105 patients receiving colchicine and hospitalized with symptomatic COVID-19. Findings suggest that colchicine plays a role in the treatment of patients with COVID-19.
- South Africa announced that it will begin its first clinical trial for a vaccine against the novel coronavirus. The South African Ox1Cov-19 Vaccine VIDA-Trial aims to find a vaccine that will prevent infection.
- Estimates suggest the impact of COVID-19 in Africa could be hardest hit in terms of health as well as socioeconomically, in the case of excess demand for health system resources is not addressed, and if social distancing policies are not vigorously implemented and enforced across all regions.

¹ This update compiled for use by Africa CDC and African Union Member States and is developed in collaboration with the World Health Organization - Regional Office for Africa. **This is a preliminary summary of information and not considered policy, guidance, or final conclusions of the Africa CDC or the African Union.**

B. New guidelines and resources

Since 20 June 2020,

- Africa CDC has published new guidance on:
 - [Revealing the toll of COVID-19: A technical package for Member States: Hand washing facility options for resource limited settings](#)
- WHO has published new guidance and resources on:
 - [Breastfeeding and COVID-19;](#)
 - [Rapid hospital readiness checklist: Interim Guidance;](#)
 - [Rapid hospital readiness checklist: tool;](#)
 - [Biomedical equipment for COVID-19 case management: tool;](#)
 - [Biomedical equipment for COVID-19 case management - inventory tool: Interim guidance;](#)
 - [ACT-Accelerator Investment Case](#)
- US CDC has published new and updated guidance and resources on:
 - [Ten Clinical Tips on COVID-19 for Healthcare Providers Involved in Patient Care;](#)
 - [Manufacturing Facility Assessment Toolkit;](#)
 - [Deployment Processes: COVID-19 Considerations;](#)
 - [Post-Deployment Processes: COVID-19 Considerations;](#)
 - [Migration and Border Health;](#)
 - [What Bank Employees Need to Know about COVID-19;](#)
 - [Framework for Implementation of COVID-19 Community Mitigation Measures for Lower-Resource Countries;](#)
 - [Markets: Operational considerations for COVID-19 mitigation measures in low resource settings;](#)
 - [CDC updates, expands list of people at risk of severe COVID-19 illness;](#)
 - [People Who Live in a Nursing Home or Long-Term Care Facility;](#)
 - [Assessing Risk Factors for Severe COVID-19 Illness;](#)
 - [An Approach for Monitoring and Evaluating Community Mitigation Strategies for COVID-19;](#)
 - [Youth Sports Program FAQs\)](#)
- ECDC has published new resources on:
 - [Heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems in the context of COVID-19](#)
- Nuffield Council on Bioethics has issued a resource on:
 - [COVID-19 antibody testing and 'immunity certification'](#)
- IFRC has issued new resource on:
 - [Practical Guidance for Risk Communication and Community Engagement \(RCCE\) for Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons](#)

[\(IDPs\), Migrants, and Host Communities Particularly Vulnerable to COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

- The full list of latest guidance and resources from WHO and other public health institutions can be found in this [link](#).

C. Scientific updates

Basic Science

- This study reports SARS-CoV-2 infection of minks on two farms in the Netherlands and describes the associated clinical signs, pathological and virological findings. [Sequence analysis of mink-derived viruses pointed at humans as the probable source of the initial infection and demonstrated transmission between minks](#). Furthermore, the presence of viral RNA in inhalable dust collected from the farms indicated a possible exposure of workers to virus excreted by minks. Findings suggests that humans can become a source of infection for minks.

Epidemiology

- A retrospective cohort study reports on the racial and ethnic differences in outcomes of 3,626 patients who tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. [Findings suggest that although being black showed an increased risk of hospitalization, race was not independently associated with higher in-hospital mortality after adjustments for differences in sociodemographic and clinical characteristics on admission](#).
- A survey study of 204 patients reports on the sinonasal manifestations associated with COVID-19. [Findings suggest that COVID-19 should be suspected when severe reduction of taste and smell are present in the absence of nasal obstruction](#).

Care and Treatment

- A retrospective, observational cohort study with [544 adults with severe COVID-19 pneumonia in Italy, treated with tocilizumab given either intravenously or subcutaneously, reports reduce risk of invasive mechanical ventilation or death in patients with severe COVID-19 pneumonia](#).
- Preliminary reports of the UK Randomised Evaluation of COVID-19 therapy (RECOVERY) trial comparing dexamethasone 6 mg given once daily for up to ten days vs. usual care alone in 2,104 patients randomly allocated to receive dexamethasone and 4,321 patients concurrently allocated to usual care. [Findings report dexamethasone reduced deaths by one-third in patients receiving invasive mechanical ventilation, by one-fifth in patients receiving oxygen without invasive mechanical ventilation](#) but did not reduce mortality in patients not receiving respiratory support. *(Not peer reviewed.)*

- A randomized clinical trial reported on the clinical outcome of 105 patients receiving colchicine and hospitalized with symptomatic COVID-19. [Findings suggest that colchicine plays a role in the treatment of patients with COVID-19.](#)
- A retrospective cohort study reports on the outcome of 4480 patients diagnosed with COVID-19 prior to ACEI/ARB use as compared with no use. [Findings suggest that prior use of ACEI/ARB was not significantly associated with COVID-19 diagnosis or mortality among patients diagnosed with COVID-19.](#)
- [European Medicine Agency recommends conditional authorization of remdesivir for treatment of COVID-19 patients.](#) This is the first drug that the European Medicine Agency recommended to be marketed as a cure against COVID-19.

Diagnostics

- This study evaluates the performance of the commercially available BIOCREDIT COVID-19 antibody test, comparing it with RT-PCR, [results indicate rapid antigen detection \(RAD\) was 103 fold less sensitive than viral culture while RAD was 105 fold less sensitive than RT-PCR.](#)

Infection Prevention and Control

- A study exploring SARS-CoV-2 environmental contamination in an ICU and an isolation ward caring for COVID-19 patients, collected air and surface samples in a hospital caring for critical and severe COVID-19 cases from common areas and areas proximal to patients. [Findings suggest that of the 218 ICU samples, an air sample contained SARS-CoV-2 RNA and of the 182 isolation ward samples, nine contained SARS-CoV-2 RNA.](#) The study demonstrates that isolation wards may pose greater risks to healthcare workers and exposure risks remain with clinically-improved patients, weeks after their initial diagnoses.

Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions

- A mathematical model based on the clinical progression of the disease, the epidemiological state of the individuals and the intervention for the dynamics of COVID-19 infections. [Findings suggest the choice of the containment strategy considerably reduced the number of dead and infected people in Tunisia.](#) With the absence of drug and vaccination, home quarantine may limit the spread of the epidemic.
- A mathematical study evaluating the impacts of various non-pharmaceutical control measures (government and personal) on the population dynamics of

COVID-19 in Lagos, Nigeria. [Findings suggest if case detection rate for symptomatic individuals can be increased to about 0.8 per day, with about 55% of the population complying with the social distancing regulations, it will lead to a great decrease in the incidence \(and prevalence\) of COVID-19.](#)

- A retrospective case series reports on community preventive measures associated with limited community transmission of COVID-19 in a city in China. [Findings suggest that the implementation of community containment strategies by a multidisciplinary team may limit the community transmission of COVID-19.](#)
- A perspective paper reviewing the options countries have to exit the lockdowns indicate three factors that need to be addressed for the consideration: [1. Reintroduction from countries with ongoing community transmission. 2. The need for extensive testing capacity and widespread community testing and 3. An adequate supply of personal protective equipment to protect health care workers.](#)

Other

- A systematic review of 19 articles and meta-analysis of sixteen studies evaluated the level of knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and risk reduction practices (KAP) related to COVID-19. [Subgroup analysis reports that 56.6% of the health care workers \(HCWs\) and medical students had poor knowledge about COVID-19 and only 46% of the total study sample had positive perceptions towards COVID-19.](#) Findings suggest an urgent need to develop evidence-based educational interventions to improve HCWs level of knowledge and to alter their KAP. Specifically, educational initiatives for HCWs to prioritize wearing a face mask and practicing hand hygiene should be considered a priority. *(Not peer reviewed)*
- A survey of 660 participants captured COVID-related conspiracy theory (CT) beliefs and broader conspiracy beliefs, education, perceived stress and attitudes towards government responses. [The results showed that COVID-19 related CT beliefs were higher in those with lower levels of education; and, positively correlated with more negative attitudes towards government responses.](#) The findings encourage more detailed exploration of the causes and sources of CTs and, in particular, the role of social media use and other information sources in the development and perpetuation of health-related CT beliefs.
- Using data from the South African National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS) authors analysed for trends in testing for suspected tuberculosis (TB) and diagnosis of microbiologically confirmed TB during the lockdown. [Findings suggest testing for TB decreased by 50%, from a weekly average of 49,109 tests during the 7 weeks pre-lockdown to an average of 24,620 during the 5-week level 5 lockdown period.](#)

- Although the recorded cases may seem low, it has been forecast that Africa will have some of the worst effects of this disease by the end of the pandemic. Generally, [African countries have fragile health systems and this remains a source of concern](#), especially in the event of increased outbreaks.
- A survey was drafted in order to address the social impact of COVID-19 lockdown on a rural village in Sierra Leone. All, except one, declared a [51–80% \(19.2%\) to 81–100% \(79.4%\) reduction of weekly income compared with the pre-lockdown period, declaring difficulties in providing food for the family members \(82%\), and anxiety \(60%\). The analyses showed that people lost their jobs and have difficulties in providing food for their families.](#)

D. Summary of travel restrictions implemented by Member States

Contents of this section include only *publicly announced* public health policies. Sources of this section include official government communique, embassy alerts and press search. (As of 26 June 2020)

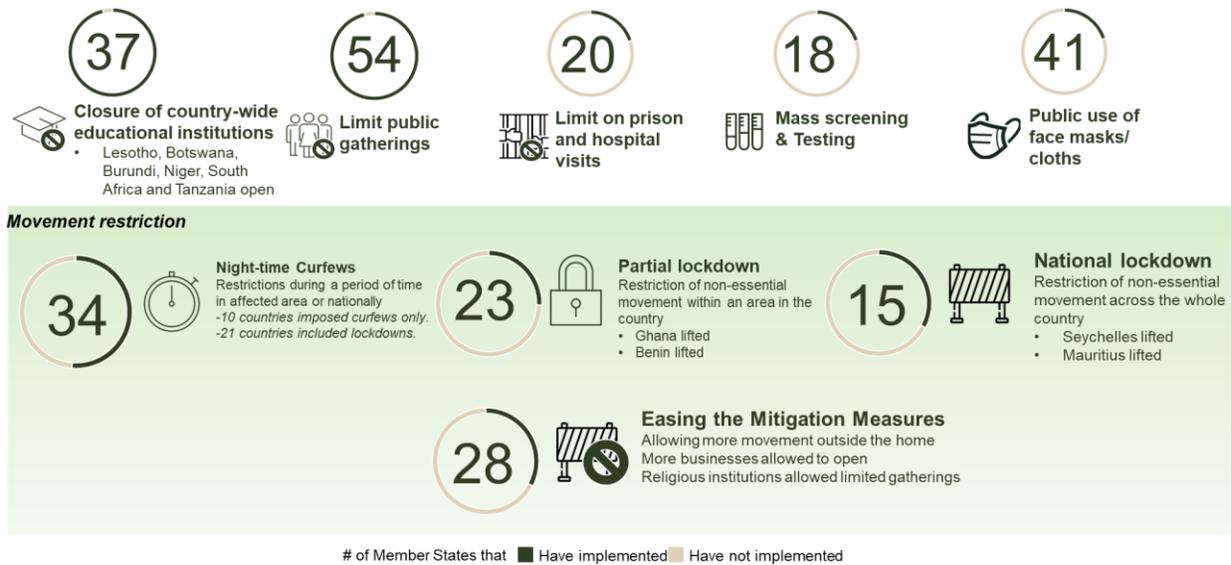


- 1 Some countries still allow cargo, freight and emergency transport into and out of the country; Some MSs will still allow citizens and residents to enter but all borders are essentially closed
- 2 Banning entry or exit of citizens or suspending visa issuance to specific countries

For further detailed information for each country, refer to the full table [here](#).

E. Summary of physical distancing measures taken by Member States

Contents of this section include only publicly announced public health policies. Sources of this section include official government communique and press search. (as of 26 June 2020)



*Source of information based on official reports, embassy alerts and press scanning

For further detailed information for each country, refer to the full table [here](#).

F. Registered Clinical Trials in Africa (52)

Key updates:

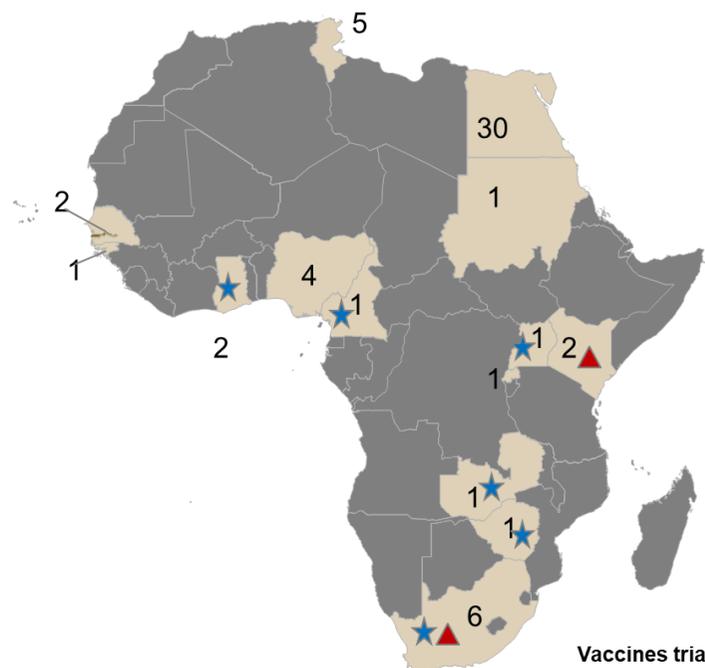
- On 24 June 2020, the updated [WHO landscape of COVID-19 vaccines](#) included 13 vaccines candidate at the clinical evaluation stage and 129 candidates at the preclinical stage.
- On 19 June 2020, [China-based Clover Biopharmaceuticals launch the Phase I trial of its Covid-19 S-Trimer subunit vaccine candidate](#), SCB-2019 at Linear Clinical Research in Perth, Australia, with support from the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). The trial will evaluate the safety, reactogenicity and immunogenicity of the vaccine candidate at different dose levels, with and without adjuvant in 90 healthy adults and 60 healthy elderly participants. GlaxoSmithKline (GSK)'s pandemic adjuvant system and Dynavax Technologies' CpG 1018 adjuvant will be evaluated.
- On 20 June 2020, [NIH announced the suspension of a clinical trial being performed to assess the safety and effectiveness of hydroxychloroquine](#) to treat adults with Covid-19 following recommendation of the data and safety monitoring board (DSMB) which estimated that the drug was unlikely to be beneficial in this indication compared to placebo. NIH noted that the data indicated no harm with the drug.

- On 20 June 2020, the Federal University of Sao Paulo (Unifesp) in Brasil, collaborating with the Oxford Vaccine Group, officially began the [Ox1Cov-19 Vaccine Trial](#), aiming to evaluate the ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 candidate in 5,000 volunteers across the country. The vaccine consists in a weakened and non-replicating version of the ChAdOx1 adenovirus engineered to express the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein.
- On 23 June 2020, the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa, also announced the vaccination of the first participants in the [Ox1Cov-19 Vaccine VIDA-Trial](#), led by vaccinology professor and Director of the South Africa Medical Research Council (SAMRC) Vaccines and Infectious Diseases Analytics Research Unit (VIDA), Prof. Shabir Madhi, working with the University of Oxford and the Oxford Vaccine Group. The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) and the University of the Witwatersrand's Human Research Ethics Committee approved the study. The trial will be performed at multiple sites across South Africa.
- On 23 June 2020, a [clinical team at Imperial College London administered a Covid-19 vaccine candidate to the first healthy participant](#) in their clinical trial of their vaccine candidate based on self-amplifying RNA (saRNA) technology, which has the potential to revolutionise vaccine development, enabling a more rapid response to emerging diseases. The Phase I/II trials will assess two doses of the vaccine in 300 healthy participants.
- On 26 June 2020, in the United Kingdom, Theravance Biopharma dosed the first participants in a [Phase II clinical study of TD-0903](#) for the treatment of Covid-19. [TD-0903 is a lung-selective, nebulised Janus kinase inhibitor \(JAKi\)](#) which could be able to block the cytokine storm related to ALI and prevent progression to acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) in COVID19 patients..

List of registered interventional clinical trials in Africa

By 28 June 2020, there were 52 clinical trials registered in Africa.

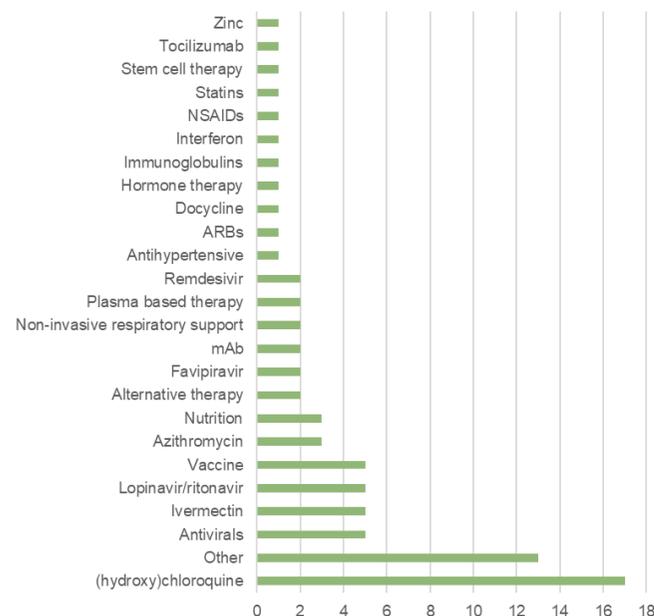
Search strategy: The following clinical trials registers have been scanned: clinicaltrials.gov, covid-trials.org, the [Pan African Clinical Trial Registry \(PACTR\)](#) and [WHO international clinical trials registry \(ICTRP\)](#). The following search terms were used: “COVID” (subject field) AND “interventional” OR “Randomized” (study type). Studies conducted in all 55 African Union member states are listed below after cross checking for duplicates across registries. Multi-centric trials as listed as one entry.



▲ **WHO Solidarity trial**
★ **Crown Coronation trial**

- Repurposed BCG (Egypt and South Africa)
- Repurposed measles (Egypt)
- Repurposed OPV (Guinea Bissau)
- Oxford University ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 vaccine (Kenya and South Africa)

Interventions evaluated in Africa



For further detailed information for each country, refer to the full table [here](#).