

Grappling with mother, newborn and child health (MNCH) issues in a continent beset by non-communicable and infectious diseases.

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Welcome to this March 2017 issue of African Health Sciences in which we bring you very diverse and interesting manuscripts. A recent report of the Uganda Demographic Health Survey indicates that the issues of mother, newborn and child health are refusing to go away, especially the twin issues of maternal and perinatal mortality¹. With that in mind, we bring you this issue of African Health sciences with papers addressing MNHC and other issues. The papers also show that the African continent is still struggling with issues of infectious diseases and a looming epidemic of non-communicable diseases in a milieu of sub-optimal education; health systems failing to cope with this double whammy of communicable and non-communicable diseases and economies trying to bear the storm of internal corruption and declining commodity prices.

But as the world becomes more isolationist, we in Africa need to critically examine the state of our health, the economy and resuscitate the health systems in order to mobilize our people to face the challenges of this information age. There is a lot of research going on. We at African Health Sciences are committed to bringing you results of some of this research based on the philosophy of unrestricted open access without the need for a credit card! Over to you!

Ethiopian scientists report on factors associated with low fifth minute Apgar score,² while a community based study in the Karamoja region in Uganda gives us very interesting information on delivery practices, hygiene, birth attendance and neonatal infections³.

We have a report on how weight during pregnancy influences body mass index and types of delivery and birth;⁴. Nigerian authors found that geophagy was a risk factor for nematode infections among pregnant women⁵. An interesting paper from Jamaica reports on sexual risk behavior among HIV-positive persons⁶. This section ends with a treatise on diversities in timing of sexual debut among Nigerian youths aged 15-24 years.⁷

We have a paper on developmental screening: predictors of follow-up adherence in primary health care⁸, followed by one on contextual determinants of adolescent mortality in South Africa⁹.

The next group of papers is on non-communicable diseases such as stroke.^{10,11}

Another one is on the association between age and gender and prescribed minimum benefit chronic disease list conditions among South Africans with concomitant hypertension, diabetes and dyslipidaemia¹².

On the other hand Abraham and others investigated the role of plasma adiponectin /C-reactive protein ratio in obesity and type 2 diabetes among African Americans¹³.

Is there an association between ALDH₂ Glu504Lys polymorphism and colorectal cancer risk? Find out from the meta-analysis by Xinhua¹⁴.

Road traffic accidents especially those involving the ubiquitous motorcycle are becoming a menace in Africa. Ugandan radiologists report on clinical and cranial computed tomography scan findings in adults following road traffic accidents in Kampala¹⁵.

Continuing with the theme of surgery in Africa, researchers from Kenya report on the effect of a ketamine infusion on tourniquet hypertension during general anaesthesia in patients undergoing limb surgery¹⁶; while Alghadir and others report on the effect of posture on swallowing¹⁷, with Kamau reporting on the effect of a preanaesthesia clinic consultation on adult patient anxiety at a tertiary hospital in Kenya¹⁸.

Now to pharmacology. Cytotoxicity testing of aqueous extract of bitter leaf (*Vernonia amygdalina* Del) and sniper 1000EC (2,3 dichlorovinyl dimethyl phosphate) using the *Aliumcepa* test¹⁹ is a paper worth studying in detail especially by those interested in ethno-pharmacology and traditional health systems.

Keeping with the pharmacology theme, we have an interesting paper on oxidative stress and histo-pathological changes induced by methylthiophanate, a systemic fungicide in blood, liver and kidney of adult rats.²⁰ Similarly, Nigerian researchers report on the renal histo-architectural changes in nevirapine therapy and the possible role of kolaviron and vitamin C in an experimental animal model.²¹

Khat use is a big challenge in the Horn of Africa. From Ethiopia, we have a paper on the prevalence of khat chewing and its effect on academic performance in Sidama zone, Southern Ethiopia²² A must read.

While the mobile phone has become ubiquitous in Africa, its possible health side effects have rarely been evaluated. Thus we welcome the report on the effect of its electromagnetic radiation on serum iron parameters in rats.²³ The section ends with a paper on in vitro investigation of clofazimine analogues for antiplasmodial, cytotoxic and pro-oxidative activities.²⁴

Have you ever heard of quorum sensing in microbiology? Then read this piece: Quorum sensing inhibitory activity of sub-inhibitory concentrations of β -lactams.²⁵

This reminds us that we can hardly afford to get off guard of these infectious diseases. So, Tanzanian workers remind us of the Siamese twin relationship between TB and HIV.²⁶ And are people living with HIV/AIDS willing to utilize HIV services provided by community health workers?²⁷ A timely piece given the recent CHW conference in Kampala.

Even if the Ebola pandemic has receded, we need to keep reflecting on the lessons learned lest we forget. Hence the value of the paper: Role of contact tracing in containing the 2014 Ebola outbreak: a review.²⁸

Do you remember David Werner's Where There is No Doctor? Brenner and others use the same title for an interesting paper on volunteer community health workers in South Western Uganda. Interesting reading. Where there is no doctor: can volunteer community health workers in rural Uganda provide integrated community case management?²⁹

This is followed by a paper on health care spending and health outcomes: evidence from selected East African countries.³⁰

Everyone is talking about hydroxyurea for sickle cell disease. Is it the magic bullet? Read the paper on its use in adult Nigerian sickle cell disease patients.³¹ One more hematology paper: The sensitivity of Na^+ , K^+ ATPase as an indicator of blood diseases.³²

Other papers include: Sonographic assessment of petroleum-induced hepatotoxicity in Nigerians³³ and practicalities of health survey field work research in a resource limited setting in Uganda.³⁴

One paper from China on the relationship between structural empowerment and organizational commitment of nurses in Zanzibar hospitals.³⁵ Concludes these papers. We have one case report that brings us to the end of this treatise³⁶. A truly mixed bag of information on MNHC, sexuality, NCDs, pharmacology and public health. Enjoy!

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