

Editorial

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a major public health concern for Rwanda, as it is for the rest of the world. Rwanda is doing well in managing the crisis through an evidence based and technocratic approach. As of March 19, Rwanda is ranked 7th worldwide and 1st in Africa on managing the COVID-19 pandemic .[1]

This result is achieved by putting in place a wide range of public health measures, including the successful implementation of public mask wearing, changing greeting rituals, and more. But also - based on the actual numbers of cases per region and the use of Artificial Intelligence prediction models - purposively designed curfews, lockdowns and school closures are put in place to contain the spread of COVID-19. More recently and successfully, Rwanda implemented its first wave of vaccinations. As importantly pointed out by His Excellency President Paul Kagame, Africa is not given fair and equal access to vaccines; and until Africans get the Covid vaccinations they need, the whole world will suffer. [2]

All public health measures are necessary for good pandemic control, but Rwandan scientists should be vigilant and study the secondary effects of such measures; and the effects of the prolonged duration of the pandemic. A recent analysis (unpublished) by Dr Yvonne Kayitshonga and Dr Darius Gishoma has shown that the numbers of suicide in the country have gone up last year, especially during lockdowns. Especially now, during the Genocide against Tutsi commemoration period, the risk of people experience emotional stress is elevated, as the COVID-19 conditions compound on the elevated levels of stress of genocide survivors during this period. Other secondary impacts to be studied

include the educational and mental health impact of school closures on children. Also, the overall impact on the health care delivery is impacted by COVID-19 and the effects should be better understood, including the impact on other vaccination programmes. Finally, we are getting messages that some elderly people did not want to be vaccinated, because of certain beliefs that they hold. In these times of 'fake news', it is more important than ever that scientists need to learn on how to efficiently communicate on health issues with the general public to avoid issues of 'fake news' and 'anti-vaxxing' to gain ground in Rwanda.

In the meantime, health research in all domains continues across the continent and we have a very interesting issue of Rwanda Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences with important contributions from Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and our home country Rwanda.

I hope you will enjoy the read.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Stefan Jansen
Ag. Editor-in-Chief

Reference

1. Lowy Institute. Covid Performance - Lowy Institute [Internet]. *Lowy Inst.* 2021. Available from: <https://interactives.lowyinstitute.org/features/covid-performance/#rankings>
2. Kagame P. Until Africans get the Covid vaccinations they need, the whole world will suffer [Internet]. *Guard.* 2021. p. 5–7. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentifree/2021/feb/07/africans-covid-vaccinations-pandemic-paul-kagame>

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