Concerns: COVID Consequences

Disruptions in prevention and treatment services due to the pandemic could cause a substantial increase in deaths in poorer nations.

September 28, 2020 By Liz Highleyman

Disruptions in prevention and treatment services due to the COVID-19 pandemic could overwhelm fragile health systems and lead to a substantial increase in deaths from HIV, tuberculosis and malaria worldwide, experts warn. In fact, these excess deaths could equal those directly caused by the new coronavirus. UNAIDS has projected that if sub-Saharan Africa sees a six-month disruption in antiretroviral treatment access, this could lead to 560,000 extra deaths by the end of 2021. Scientists at the Medical Research Council Center for Global Infectious Disease Analysis estimated that disruptions to prevention, care and treatment services could increase the annual death rate by as much as 10% for HIV, 20% for tuberculosis and 36% for malaria over the next five years. But there is still an opportunity to substantially reduce the death toll by prioritizing the most critical services: antiretroviral therapy for HIV, timely diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis and durable insecticide-treated nets to control mosquitoes that spread malaria.

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