



### In this Issue

On page 1 we feature the article authored by leading AIDS scientists on PEPFAR's reauthorisation published in the NEJM.

We report on Prof Quarraisha Abdool Karim's appointment on the Steering committee of WSF; and congratulate Prof Kogie Naidoo on her election as a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa.

In this issue (on pages 3, 4 & 5) Prof Salim Abdool Karim pays tribute to Prof Jerry Coovadia's remarkable legacy as a leading AIDS scientist and struggle stalwart who passed away on 4 October 2023.

On page 6 we report on presentations at the 3rd International Forum on Big Data for Sustainable Development Goals, the US National Academy of Medicine & the Global HPV Consortium.

On page 5 we highlight the presentation of findings of the SHAPE project; and the presentation on new STIs prevention agents & diagnostics at the HPTN Regional meeting on page 7.

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# CAPRISA

CENTRE FOR THE AIDS PROGRAMME OF RESEARCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

## Newsletter

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## International AIDS experts call for PEPFAR to be reauthorised without restrictions

**G**lobal scientists urged the US Congress to reauthorise the US President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR) without restrictions in a perspectives article entitled "Threatening the Global AIDS Response — Obstacles to PEPFAR's Reauthorization" published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* (NEJM).

The scientists expressed deep concern saying if PEPFAR received anything less than its next five-year reauthorisation, global AIDS programmes would be jeopardised, and there would be little chance of reaching the global 2030 goal of ending HIV/AIDS as a public health threat.

Prof Salim Abdool Karim joined 8 leading scientists saying compromising the AIDS relief programme would reverse hard-won gains against the disease.

Abdool Karim warned that "we could see a substantial increase in new HIV infections and Aids deaths, with a big concern that treatment interruptions may lead to drug-resistant forms of HIV spreading across the world."

Nobel laureates Profs Françoise Barré-Sinoussi and Harold Varmus together with Profs David Serwadda of Uganda, Elizabeth Bukusi of Kenya, Souleymane M'boup of Senegal, Adeeba Kamarulzaman of Malaysia, Soumya Swaminathan of India, and Jean W. Pape of Haiti, called on the US Congress to support the PEPFAR 5-year strategy of building a sustainable global HIV/AIDS response by strengthening public health systems, partnerships, innovation, and the ability of countries to respond to other pandemic threats.

They contend that "PEPFAR's 5-year reauthorization is critical not only to the global AIDS response but also to responses to future pandemics and threats to global security."

"Right from the start, PEPFAR was more than just an AIDS program; it partnered with countries in Africa to support the development of health systems for essential community services, trained thousands of health care workers, fostered security and stability in affected countries, and engendered hope amid a devastating global AIDS crisis," wrote the scientists.

For further reading see: *N Engl J Med* 2023; 389:1159-1161 <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2310330>

Image source: @PEPFAR  
Through PEPFAR, the U.S. has invested in surveillance systems, laboratories, supply chains, & health workers around the world.





## Prof Quarraisha Abdool Karim visits Jordan



of the WSF 2024 Steering Committee on 11 September in Amman, Jordan hosted by Her Royal Highness Princess Sumaya hint El Hassan of Jordan, the Chair of World Science Forum 2017 and President of the Royal Scientific Society of Jordan (Photo).

HRH Prince Hassan, Chairman of the Royal Scientific Society (RSS), met with delegates of the Steering Committee of the World Science Forum 2024 (WSF 2024). In his address he called for action to global challenges “based on intelligence and a shared humanity,” the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. The

**P**rofessor Quarraisha Abdool Karim and Associate Scientific Director, CAPRISA has been invited as President of TWAS to serve as a member of the Steering Committee of the World Science Forum (WSF) and its first meeting was held in Jordan.

forum, which is held every two years, is the largest global gathering of scientists and policymakers.

The 2024 Budapest World Science Forum will take place from 20-23 November 2024 with the theme "The Science and Policy Interface in the Time of Global Transformation" as the main theme of the event. Abdool Karim attended the first meeting of members

HRH Princess Sumaya reiterated the commitment of the RSS and of Jordan to working with international organisations to help improve science policy and science responses to challenges including climate change, water, energy and poverty. Princess Sumaya stressed the importance of harnessing the energy of the WSF to make a real difference to lives, livelihoods and the planet.

## Prof Kogie Naidoo is elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa

**C**APRISA’s Deputy Director, Prof Kogie Naidoo, has been elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa for her seminal research over three decades in TB-HIV co-infection and multidrug resistant TB and was among the first to implement public antiretroviral therapy (ART) services for people living with HIV in South Africa over 25 years ago.



lives of patients with HIV-TB co-infection. This work led to the WHO advice that co-treatment should be the standard-of-care for people living with both HIV and TB.

Naidoo is among South Africa’s highly accomplished medical scientists playing a leading role in tuberculosis research, the leading cause of death in people living with HIV (PLWH) and has made significant contributions to the global understanding on TB-HIV treatment integration.

Naidoo who leads the HIV-TB treatment programme at CAPRISA said she was “honoured and deeply humbled by the recognition.” “My passion is to save lives through medical research; and change the lives of vulnerable, marginalised populations who are most affected by tuberculosis, multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, and HIV.”

Together with her colleagues, her research showed that starting antiretroviral treatment (ART) at the same time as tuberculosis treatment resulted in 56% lower death rate, saving

The Royal Society of South Africa a “learned society composed of eminent South African scientists and academics,” made the announcement today, following “rigorous consideration by the Society’s Adjudication Committee” and approval by the Council and current RSSAf Fellows.



# Professor Coovadia: South Africa loses a great paediatrician, scientist and struggle stalwart

by *Salim S. Abdool Karim*

**T**he world has lost a great paediatrician, scientist and champion for freedom and justice. I was profoundly saddened to learn of the passing of Professor Hoosen Mohamed Coovadia, who was my mentor, role model, colleague and dearest friend. “Jerry” as he was fondly known, was a remarkable human being - a force of nature and a man of impeccable integrity. We are saying goodbye to one of South Africa’s greatest scientists and staunchest proponents of democracy and equality. He stood well above others for his integrity and unwavering commitment to a just world.

I pay tribute to his wife Dr Zubie Hamed, son Professor Imraan Coovadia and daughter Dr Anushka Coovadia as well as his extended family for their unwavering support during his many years spent in fighting for social justice.

## The intellectual and scientist...

I first met Professor Coovadia 43 years ago, when I attended a Natal Indian Congress organised meeting and came away deeply impressed by his incisive contributions to the discussions. We quickly became friends and comrades in the anti-apartheid struggle. I would often have lunch with him in his office on the fourth floor of the medical school, just listening and appreciating his views and analyses of the world. He had so much to share, teach and instil in a young medical student. One afternoon as he crunched on a carrot in his lunch salad, he turned to me and asked me if I would be interested in doing a research project with him. Little did he or I appreciate how life-changing that request would turn out to be.

Professor Coovadia came alive when he talked science, passion oozing from every pore, he would take on complex medical problems and transform them almost effortlessly into a series of research questions. His mind was both inquisitive and methodical. He was never scared to take on taboo challenges in medicine. And he did not tolerate fools easily – a stickler for the rigours of the scientific method, there was no talk of anything but scientific excellence in his presence. The same applied when I saw patients and attended paediatric ward rounds with him.



As a mentor, he set a high bar, forcing me repeatedly to push the boundaries of knowledge. He was an unparalleled intellect and never compromised on anything less than world-class excellence. He had a major influence on my life and my choice of research as a career. He was always there to support and guide me, offering warm words of friendly advice as I began my career in medical research. I would not be where I am today without him!

## Passionate champion for justice...

Right from the time I first met him, I saw that Professor Coovadia was as passionate about freedom and justice as he was about science. He played a prominent role in the struggle for a democratic South Africa and took a principled stand against non-racialism.

Although he started his medical studies at the University of Natal in South Africa, he chose to complete his medical degree at Grant Medical College in Bombay in the 1960s. Not only did he meet his future wife, Zubie Hamed, there but he also became politically active as a student in India. He was instrumental in forming a political body called the South African Students Association, which invited members of the African National Congress in exile, such as Dr Dadoo, to address them on freedom and the anti-apartheid movement. Upon his return, he worked at King Edward VIII Hospital and subsequently joined the Department of Paediatrics at the University of Natal Medical School. In the 1970s, he was one of the key figures in rekindling the Natal Indian Congress and was subsequently elected its vice-president. In the 1980s, he was actively involved in the United Democratic Front.

Politics and health were two sides of the same coin for him. He fought for equitable health care and was a founding member of the National Medical and Dental Association (NAMDA), which was set up by progressive doctors following the Medical Association of South Africa’s complacency regarding the doctors who were complicit in Biko’s death.

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## ...A Tribute to Professor Jerry Coovadia

In 1988, Quarraisha and I travelled with him to Mexico, Nicaragua and El Salvadore to study their health care systems. We went to the village in foothills of the Sierra Madre mountains to spend a week with David Werner to study how he set up health care for the rural poor, which his book, "Where there is no doctor" famously describes. This visit left an indelible impression on Professor Coovadia and shaped his thinking about how South Africa should address its health care needs. He spoke extensively on South Africa's need for a National Health Service, with National Health Insurance as a stepping stone, being built on the foundations of primary health care.

He was formidable as an anti-apartheid activist – strategic and penetrating in his analysis of the tactics needed to advance the struggle for freedom. In the 1980s he was part of a delegation to meet the African National Congress in Lusaka before the organisation was unbanned. He took part in the preliminary discussions and negotiations at the Congress for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). As a result of his political activities, Professor Coovadia was targeted by the apartheid regime – his house was bombed during the political turbulence in the early 1990s.

### A global leader in AIDS...

Professor Coovadia specialised in paediatrics at the University of Natal and became a Fellow of the College of Paediatricians of the College of Medicine of South Africa in 1971. In 1974, he obtained his MSc in Immunology from the University of Birmingham in the UK. His interest in paediatric HIV/AIDS developed in the early 1990s as the extent of the tragedy in South Africa

began to unfold. His particular interest was the transmission of the virus from mother to child, a field in which he challenged conventional wisdom about breastfeeding and became internationally recognized for his ground-breaking research on saving babies lives by reducing HIV transmission from mother to child through exclusive breastfeeding.

His international stature in HIV/AIDS led to him being appointed as Chairperson of the XIIIth International AIDS Conference in Durban in July 2000. This conference is widely credited for expediting access to AIDS treatment in poor countries. It brought him national and international accolades but also resulted in clashes with some prominent government figures at the time, especially President Mbeki and Minister Tshabalala-Msimang. He stood up to these AIDS denialists undaunted. Despite being vilified by some for his clashes with the president, Professor Coovadia persisted in speaking truth to power regardless, never faltering.

### An accomplished academic leader...

After retiring as Head of Paediatrics, Professor Coovadia was appointed the Victor Daitz Chair in HIV/AIDS Research, and Director of Biomedical Science at the Centre for HIV/AIDS Networking (HIVAN) at the Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine, University of Natal. He thereafter served with Quarraisha and me in the leadership of the Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA). In 2010, he was appointed together with a group of experts to government's National Planning Commission to guide the development plan of South Africa. A few years ago, he served as President of SAMA. ... Continued on page 5



Photo left: (L-R) Prof Jerry Coovadia & Dr Zubie Hamed with Profs Quarraisha and Salim Abdool Karim at CAPRISA's celebration of excellence event in 2015.



Photo right: (L-R) Prof Jerry Coovadia participates at the 2015 CAPRISA Scientific Advisory Board meeting held in Durban. Seated to his right are Prof Quarraisha Abdool Karim and Dr Deborah Bix Ambassador-at-Large and U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator at the time.



## SHAPE project under the spotlight at the Fast Track Cities Conference in Amsterdam & HIV International workshop

CAPRISA's Strengthening Health systems through Audit and Programmatic Evaluation (SHAPE) project, a collaboration with eThekweni Municipality Health Unit which is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation was under the spotlight at two major meetings where study findings were presented.

Miss Kwena Tlhaku, a social science researcher based at CAPRISA's eThekweni Clinical Research Site, presented an e-poster at the Fast Track Cities 2023 Conference in Amsterdam, while Mr Kwabena Asare, a statistician based at the CAPRISA headquarters, presented an oral abstract at the 30th International Workshop on HIV Drug Resistance and Treatment Strategies 2023 in Cape Town.

Tlhaku's e-poster, entitled "Health-care workers' perceptions of 12-month ART prescriptions: a qualitative study", evaluated the impact of changes to community antiretroviral therapy (ART) delivery that were introduced during COVID-19. Miss Tlhaku was part of the eThekweni delegation, joined by esteemed figures, including the eThekweni mayor, honourable Mxolisi Kaunda and the Head of Health at eThekweni Municipality, Mrs Rosemary van Heerden.



Asare presented an oral abstract titled, "Clinical outcomes after the introduction of dolutegravir for second-line antiretroviral therapy in South Africa: a retrospective cohort study". The study used routine data from 59 clinics in the eThekweni Municipality, Kwazulu-Natal province to show that new dolutegravir-based second-line ART regimens led to as good, or better, retention-in care and viral suppression, compared to older lopinavir-based regimens. However, as outcomes from this routine care setting were lower than those seen in clinical trials, Mr. Asare emphasized that medication adherence remains a major bottleneck for better HIV treatment outcomes.

Photo: (L-R) Dr Snothile Malinga, Masters Student, UKZN; Ms Thabi Mfeka, Deputy Head of the Mayoral Parlour; Ms Kwena Tlhaku, Research Assistant at CAPRISA ECRS; His Worship Mayor Mxolisi Kaunda; Prof. Nobilelo Magula, Head of UKZN's Department of Internal Medicine; Dr Zanele Moya, Masters Student, UKZN; Mrs Rosemary van Heerden, Deputy Head of Health at eThekweni Municipality; and Nthabiseng Malakoane, eThekweni District AIDS Committee Coordinator

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Professor Coovadia has received numerous accolades and awards including the Star of South Africa and the Nelson Mandela Award for Health and Human Rights for his contributions to democracy and health. He has honorary doctorates from the Universities of Durban Westville, Witwatersrand and Cape Town. He received the silver medal from the South African Medical Research Council.

He is one of a handful of South Africans to be elected as a Foreign Member of the US National Academy of Medicine. He received the Science-for-Society Gold Medal award of the Academy of Science of South Africa; a Lifetime Achievement Award during the HIV Congress in India; the American Association for the Advancement of Science Scientific Freedom and Responsibility Award; the International Association of Physicians in AIDS and Care Award; and the Heroes in Medicine Award in Toronto, Canada.

### A great loss...

Professor Coovadia was a patriot, deeply committed to a better and more just South Africa. He was a fierce critic of maladministration and corruption in government and was vocal about how he felt that the struggle for a free and just country was being jeopardised by greed and incompetence. A few years ago, he developed weakness in both limbs, which progressively deteriorated until he became wheelchair bound. Quarraisha, our children and I recently visited Professor Coovadia to give him a signed copy of my book, he was chatty and in good spirits. Even then, he talked about some new developments in AIDS research.

His untimely demise has left us with a deep sense of loss but we are heartened for the privilege of having had Professor Coovadia as a close friend. We have lost a visionary who remained forever hopeful that South Africa would be a great country, one that cared for its poor and vulnerable, especially its children. We have lost an icon in the world of medical science, unwavering in his commitment to saving lives through his research. We have lost a great man who towered above others for his integrity and compassion.

Prof Salim S. Abdool Karim, Director CAPRISA



## TWAS President calls for a Global Health Data Sharing Framework for Global Health emergencies in her keynote address at 3<sup>rd</sup> International FBAS



Global Health emergencies. "National and regional data had global implications. The framework should guide the rapid collection of real-time data, the effective use of data, identifying managing, and responding to pandemics - analysing and sharing data for the global public good," she said.

**P**rofessor Quarraisha Abdool Karim President of TWAS was invited to deliver the opening remarks and the keynote address in the plenary and parallel sessions at the 3rd International Forum on Big Data for Sustainable Development Goals (FBAS 2023), held on 6-8 September 2023 at the Beijing International Convention Centre, Beijing, China, themed "Big Data Accelerating Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The Forum is hosted by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and co-organized by the International Research Centre of Big Data for Sustainable Development Goals (CBAS) and the Aerospace Information Research Institute, CAS, was attended by some 700 accomplished experts from more than 50 countries.

Abdool Karim delivered the opening remarks and the first keynote address entitled: "Big Data and Getting Back on Track to meet the 2030 SDG Goals: Lessons from the Pandemic". In her presentation Abdool Karim reiterated the call by the Inter Academy Partnership (IAP) for a Global Health Data Sharing Framework for

The International Advisory Committee (IAC) of the International Research Centre of Big Data for SDGs (CBAS) convened a Special Session during the International Forum on Big Data for SDGs (FBAS 2023) with the theme "Promoting International Collaborations on Big Data for Sustainable Development."

"We are grateful for your (Abdool Karim's) outstanding contributions to FBAS 2023", said Professor Huadong Guo, Chair of the 3rd International Forum on Big Data for Sustainable Development Goals and Director General of International Research Center of Big Data for Sustainable Development Goals, "and believe that the success of FBAS 2023 in no small part is due to your support and participation. We value your opening remarks as well as keynote speech in both the plenary session and parallel session and recognize your constant efforts for adoption of digital technologies to accelerate the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."

### Prof Quarraisha Abdool Karim delivers a presentation at the US NAM

**P**rofessor Quarraisha Abdool Karim, Associate Scientific Director, CAPRISA participated as an invited speaker at the 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the US National Academy of Medicine held in Washington on 8 October. Abdool Karim delivered a presentation entitled 'The Challenge of HIV in Women in Africa' in the session "Women's Health and Infectious Diseases" and participated in the panel discussion.



### Dr Nivashnee Naicker attends the launch of The Global HPV Consortium

**D**r Nivashnee Naicker, PI vaccine studies and CASCADE Clinical Trials Network lead at the CAPRISA eThekweni Clinical Research Site (ECRS), attended the launch of The Global HPV Consortium in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia. Dr Naicker was a guest panellist on "The Learning Agenda for Accelerating HPV Prevention and Cervical Cancer Elimination" session and led discussion on single dose HPV vaccination in the context of high HIV prevalence settings as well as the HIV-HPV dynamic.





## New STI Prevention Agents and Diagnostics presented at HPTN Regional meeting

CAPRISA's Dr Nigel Garrett (Head: Vaccine and Pathogenesis Research), Dr Leila Mansoor (Senior Scientist) and Dr Razia Hassan Moosa (eThekweni Research Site PI for the HPTN 109 study) attended the HIV Prevention Trials Network (HPTN) Regional Meeting held in Cape Town from 27 – 29 September.

The meeting objectives included the synergy in STI and HIV prevention research, improving PrEP uptake and strengthening collaboration and promotion of active involvement between HPTN leadership, site leadership, community, and staff.

Garrett's presentation entitled: "New STI Prevention Agents and Diagnostics" provided an overview of the STI landscape in the context of HIV, the STI burden and challenges of STI care in Southern Africa, opportunities for research with new technologies and vaccines, including point-of-care diagnostics to reduce genital inflammation and HIV Risk, STI vaccines and better partner treatment services.



Photo (L-R): Prof Nigel Garrett, Head: Vaccine and Pathogenesis Research; Dr Razia Moosa, eThekweni Research Site PI for the HPTN 109 study; and Dr Leila Mansoor Senior Scientist.

## Vietnamese students gain research exposure at South African clinical research sites

CAPRISA hosted two students from the College of Health Sciences at the Vin University in Vietnam on an Academic Exchange Programme.

Ms Nguyễn Ngọc Mai Linh - 2<sup>nd</sup> year MBBS student and Ms Trần Ngọc Trân - 3<sup>rd</sup> year Bachelor of Nursing student gained exposure to clinical research in HIV/TB, at urban and rural research clinics set in line with the medical degree requirements of The Vin University.



Linh and Tran visited CAPRISA's Clinical Research Sites including the head office, engaged with CAPRISA's leadership, heads of divisions, clinicians, scientists, post-doctoral, doctoral and masters fellows, attended various orientation and training sessions and interacted with medical students on the CAPRISA Research Placement programme. Ms Luong Thi Cam Tu, Academic Engagement and Global Exchange Department, said it "has been an incredible journey for them (Linh and Tran), and CAPRISA played a vital role in making it a memorable and enriching global experience. The academic and research exposure, cultural immersion, personal and professional growth they have gained are immeasurable...We are confident that this experience will significantly shape their academic and professional journey."

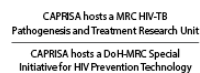
Photo: Ms Nguyễn Ngọc Mai Linh and Ms Trần Ngọc Trân (centre in red in the photo) with CAPRISA Fellows and Clinical Research Placements



# A selection of scientific papers published in 2023

- \*57 **Mahomed S, Garrett N, Potloane D, Sikazwe IT, Capparelli E, Harkoo I, Gengiah TN, Zuma NY, Osman F, Mansoor L, Archary D, Myeni N, Radebe P, Samsunder N, Rose ND, Carlton K, Gama L, Koup RA, Narpala S, Serebryanny L, Moore P, Williams C, Pozzetto B, Hankins C, Morris L, Karim QA, Abdool Karim S.** Extended safety and tolerability of subcutaneous CAP256V2LS and VRC07-523LS in HIV-negative women: study protocol for the randomised, placebo-controlled double-blinded, phase 2 CAPRISA 012C trial. *BMJ Open*.2023;13(8):e076843.doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2023-
- 58 **Rambaran S, Maseko TG, Lewis L, Hassan-Moosa R, Archary D, Ngcapu S, Garrett N, McKinnon LR, Padayatchi N, Naidoo K, Sivro A.** Blood monocyte and dendritic cell profiles among people living with HIV with Mycobacterium tuberculosis co-infection. *BMC Immunology*.2023;24(1):21.doi:10.1186/s12865-023-00558-z.
- 59 **Maseko TG, Rambaran S, Ngubane S, Lewis L, Ngcapu S, Hassan-Moosa R, Archary D, Perumal R, Padayatchi N, Naidoo K, Sivro A.** NK cell phenotypic profile during active TB in people living with HIV-evolution during TB treatment and implications for bacterial clearance and disease severity. *Scientific Reports*.2023;13(1):11726.doi:10.1038/s41598-023-38766-7.
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- 63 Gbinigie O, Ogburn E, Allen J, **Dorward J**, et al., Platform adaptive trial of novel antivirals for early treatment of COVID-19 In the community (PANORAMIC): protocol for a randomised, controlled, open-label, adaptive platform trial of community novel antiviral treatment of COVID-19 in people at increased risk of more severe disease. *BMJ Open*. 2023;13(8):e069176.doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2022-069176.
- 64 Krause RGE, Moyo-Gwete T, Richardson SI, Makhado Z, Manamela NP, Hermanus T, Mkhize NN, Keeton R, Benede N, Mennen M, Skelem S, Karim F, Khan K, Riou C, Ntusi NAB, Goga A, Gray G, Hanekom W, **Garrett N**, Bekker LG, Groll A, Sigal A, Moore PL, Burgers WA, Leslie A. Infection pre-Ad26.COV2.S-vaccination primes greater class switching and reduced CXCR5 expression by SARS-CoV-2-specific memory B cells. *NPJ Vaccines*.2023;8(1):119.doi:10.1038/s41541-023-00724-9.
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- 67 Makofane K, Kim HY, Tchetgen Tchetgen E, Bassett MT, Berkman L, Adeagbo O, McGrath N, Seeley J, Shahmanesh M, Yapa HM, Herbst K, **Tanser F**, et al., Impact of family networks on uptake of health interventions: evidence from a community-randomized control trial aimed at increasing HIV testing in South Africa. *Journal of the International AIDS Society*.2023;26(8):e26142.doi:10.1002/jia2.26142.

\* continuation from previous newsletter

For the complete list of publications see here: <http://bit.ly/3IRvjZd>

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