



Describing the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on HIV Care in Latin America

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BACKGROUND

- The COVID-19 pandemic affects people living with HIV (PWH) beyond SARS-CoV-2 co-infection
- There may be devastating consequences for HIV care delivery
- Reduced antiretroviral therapy (ART) availability alone could lead to ≥500,000 AIDS-related deaths in 2020-2021¹
- Latin America is now a focal point in the pandemic, so we have described the impact of COVID-19 on HIV care at Latin American clinical sites

METHODS

- Inclusion:** Latin American HIV care sites in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, and Peru that are part of the Caribbean, Central and South America network for HIV epidemiology (CCASAnet) or additional Brazilian HIV care sites that are part of Coorte Brasil
- Outcomes:** COVID-19 effects on HIV clinic operations were measured by electronic surveys administered in Spanish or English via phone and email, from April 28-June 2, 2020
- We also describe national COVID-19 case, mortality, and policy data in Latin America from public sources²⁻⁴

RESULTS

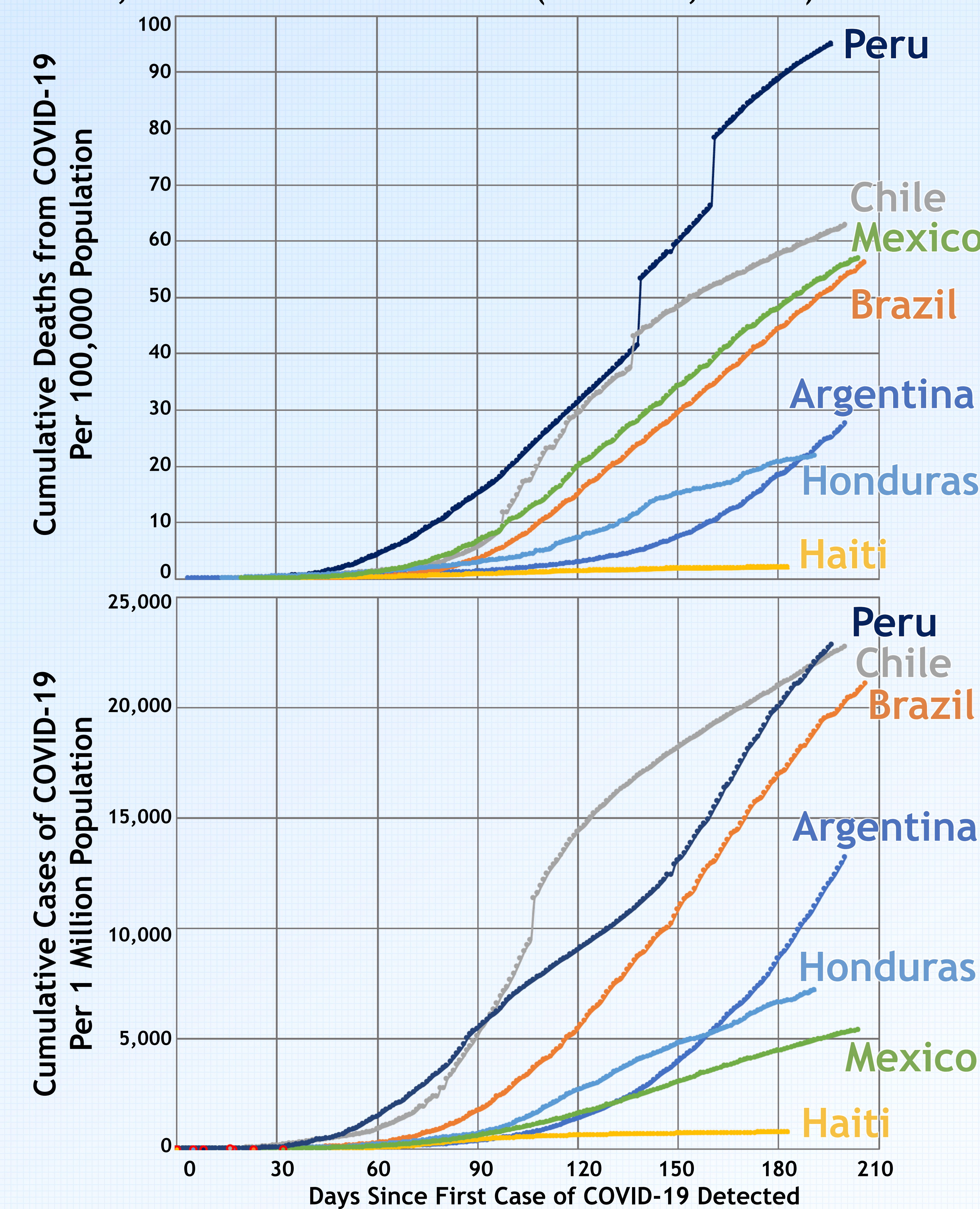
- Nearly all 13 sites reported decreased hours and providers for HIV care
- Twelve of 13 reported increased use of telehealth, suspension/postponements of routine HIV appointments, and/or suspension of HIV research
- Eleven of 13 reported initiation of new COVID-19 research but suspension of community HIV testing, and nearly half provided additional ART to avoid the need for more frequent ART pick-ups
- Nearly 70% reported impacts on HIV viral load testing and nearly 40% reported personal protective equipment stock-outs (Table)
- All 13 sites experienced changes in resources/services in tandem with national policies; there was wide variation, however, in the number and type of economic and health supports implemented within the first few months of the pandemic (e.g., quarantines, tax deferrals, interest rate reductions, etc.), from 30 to >150 COVID-19-related policies

Table. Site Assessment: Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on HIV services in Latin America at CCASAnet & Coorte Sites, N=13

	Yes	No	N/A
Has the locality of this HIV care and treatment unit been subject to a national, state/province, county, or municipal lockdown, restrictions on travel and/or business operations, or social distancing orders to curb the spread of COVID-19?	13	0	
Do restrictions remain in place at the time of survey?	13	0	
Has this HIV care and treatment unit been subject to a national, state/province, county, or municipal order to suspend or reduce non-emergency health services in order to curb the spread of COVID-19?	9	4	
Do non-emergency services remain suspended at the time of survey?	9	0	
During the past 3 months has the COVID-19 response resulted in any of the following changes in operations of the HIV care & treatment clinic			
a. Decreased hours/days	11	2	
b. Decreased # of providers	11	2	
c. Re-assignment of HIV providers	8	5	
d. Reduced availability of HIV providers	7	3	
e. Postponement of appointments/service	12	1	
f. Reconfiguration of hospital/clinic space	11	2	
g. Increased use of PPE	13	0	
h. Increased use of telehealth	12	1	
i. Interruptions in recording data for care	8	5	
j. Postponement of ongoing research	12	1	
k. Interruptions in recording data for research	7	6	
l. Initiation of new research for COVID-19	11	2	
m. Withdrawal/suspension of NGOs	6	5	2
During the past 3 months has the COVID-19 response resulted in any of the following changes in community-based HIV services for patients referred to or enrolled in care at this HIV clinic?			
a. Partial or complete suspension of community-based HIV testing	11	1	1
b. Partial or complete suspension of community-based ART refills	1	10	2
c. Partial or complete suspension of community-based support group meetings/activities	12	0	1
d. Partial or complete suspension of community-based defaulter tracing activities	4	3	6
e. Withdrawal/suspension of activities of non-governmental partners that support community-based programs for patients	7	1	5
During the past 3 months, have ART services at your clinic/hospital been impacted by COVID-19?	7	6	
How have routine ART services at this clinic been affected?			
ART clinics have been suspended or shutdown	1	12	
ART pick up points have been designated in the community	1	12	
Patients are being given additional supplies/refills of ART to reduce the frequency of refills	6	7	
How have ART initiation services for newly enrolling patients been affected by COVID-19?			
ART initiation services have been suspended or shut down	2	11	
Same-day or rapid ART initiation services have been introduced	2	11	
Adherence counseling has been modified to avoid delays in ART initiation	3	10	
Not Applicable (no change)	3	10	
During the past 3 months, have viral load testing services for patients enrolled in HIV care at your clinic/hospital been impacted by COVID-19?	9	4	
How have viral load testing services been affected by COVID-19?			
Sample collection for viral load testing have been suspended	4	9	
Laboratory for viral load testing not accepting samples	3	10	
Viral load results turnaround time longer	2	11	
During the past 3 months, has this hospital/clinic experienced stock outs of HIV test kits?	0	11	2
Has this hospital experienced stockouts of antiretroviral drugs during the past 3 months?	0	13	
During the past 3 months, has this hospital/clinic experienced stock outs of personal protective equipment (PPE)?	5	8	
Which of the following types of PPE have recorded stock out(s)?			
Masks	5	8	
Gowns	3	10	
Gloves	2	11	
Disinfectants	1	12	
Other (see below for specific other)	2	11	
Facial protection	1	0	
Face shields	1	0	
During the past 3 months, has this hospital/clinic provided health education/messaging related to COVID-19 for patients enrolled in HIV care?	10	3	
Does this hospital/clinic have a surveillance system for COVID-19 incidence?	7	6	
Does this hospital/clinic have the ability to do contact tracing for individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19?	9	4	

RESULTS (continued)

- Peru's and Chile's epidemics appear most pronounced, with ~60-90 confirmed COVID-19-related deaths per 100,000 population (Top)
- Countries implemented "social distancing" policies at different times; Haiti earliest & Mexico latest (red circles; Bottom)



CONCLUSIONS

- The COVID-19 pandemic has substantially affected HIV clinic operations in Latin America, which merits continued monitoring