

# Virus cases up sharply in Africa, India as inequality stings

July 11 2020, by Cara Anna



Covid-19 patients are being treated with oxygen at the Tshwane District Hospital in Pretoria, South Africa, Friday July 10, 2020. Health Minister Zweli Mkhize this week said South Africa could run out of available hospital beds within the month. "The storm that we have consistently warned South Africans about is now arriving," he told lawmakers. The African continent overall has over 523,000 confirmed virus cases after passing the half-million milestone on Wednesday. But shortages in testing materials mean the true number is unknown.(AP Photo/Jerome Delay)

South Africa's confirmed coronavirus cases have doubled in just two weeks to a quarter-million, and India on Saturday saw its biggest daily spike as its infections passed 800,000. The surging cases are raising sharp concerns about unequal treatment in the pandemic, as the wealthy hoard medical equipment and use private hospitals and the poor crowd into overwhelmed public facilities.

Globally more than 12.5 million people have been infected by the virus and over 560,000 have died, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. Experts say the pandemic's true toll is much higher due to testing shortages, poor data collection in some nations and other issues.

Some of the worst-affected countries are among the world's most unequal. South Africa leads them all on that measure, with the pandemic exposing the gap in care.

In Johannesburg, the epicenter of South Africa's outbreak, badly needed oxygen concentrators that help COVID-19 patients who are struggling to breathe are hard to find as private businesses and individuals are buying them up, a public health specialist volunteering at a field hospital, Lynne Wilkinson, told The Associated Press.

Meanwhile, South Africa's public hospitals are short on medical oxygen—and they are now seeing a higher proportion of deaths than private ones, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases says.

South Africa now has more than 250,000 confirmed coronavirus cases, including more than 3,800 deaths. To complicate matters, the country's troubled power utility has announced new electricity cuts in the dead of winter as a cold front brings freezing weather. Many of the country's

urban poor live in shacks of scrap metal and wood.



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And in Kenya, some have been outraged by a local newspaper report that says several governors have installed intensive care unit equipment in their homes. The country lost its first doctor to COVID-19 this week.

"The welfare, occupational safety & health of frontline workers is a non-negotiable minimum!!" the Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists and Dentists Union tweeted after her death. On Saturday, the union and other medical groups urged President Uhuru Kenyatta to implement a promised compensation package to ease the "anxiety and fear that has now gripped health care workers."

More than 8,000 health workers across Africa have been infected, half of them in South Africa. The continent of 1.3 billion has the world's lowest levels of health staffing and more than 560,000 cases, and the pandemic is reaching "full speed," the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.

Many parts of the world are facing fresh waves of infections as they try to reopen their economies.



A health worker takes a nasal swab of a person for COVID-19 test as a policewoman stands guard at a local dispensary in New Delhi, India, Saturday, July 11, 2020. India has overtaken Russia to become the third worst-affected nation by the coronavirus pandemic. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)

In India, which reported a new daily high of 27,114 cases on Saturday, nearly a dozen states have imposed a partial lockdown in high-risk areas. Cases jumped from 600,000 to more than 800,000 in nine days. People are packing India's public hospitals as many are unable to afford private ones that generally uphold higher standards of care.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged top officials to improve infection testing and tracking, especially in states with high positivity rates.

Officials on the southern Japanese island of Okinawa said dozens of U.S. Marines have been infected at two bases there in what is feared to be a massive outbreak. The officials said the U.S. military asked that the exact figure not be released.

"We now have strong doubts that the U.S. military has taken adequate disease prevention measures," Gov. Denny Tamaki told reporters.



Pupils of the senior class of the high school Bergschule in Apolda, Germany, wait in a drive-in cinema for the presentation of their school-leaving certificates and honours on Saturday, July 11, 2020. Due to the Corona pandemic, the certificates are handed over outdoors and the families remain in the car. (Martin Schutt/dpa via AP)

In Australia, the beleaguered state of Victoria reported 216 new cases in the past 24 hours, down from the record 288 the previous day. It hopes a new six-week lockdown in Melbourne, Australia's second-largest city with a population of 5 million, will curb the spread.

"We cannot pretend that doing anything other than following the rules will get us to the other side of this," said Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews.

In Latin America, where inequality is sharp and Brazil and Peru are among the world's top five most badly hit countries, the COVID-19 pandemic is sweeping through the continent's leadership, with two more

presidents and powerful officials testing positive in the past week.

Yet developing countries are not the only ones overwhelmed. Confirmed COVID-19 cases in the U.S. have hit 3 million, with over 130,000 deaths—the worst outbreak by far in the world. The surge has led to equipment shortages as well as long lines at testing sites.



A British pilot who was Vietnam's most critical COVID-19 patient is carried on a stretcher in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam, Saturday, July 11, 2020. The 42-year-old man was discharged from a hospital on Saturday, less than a week after doctors said he was virus-free and healthy enough to return home to Scotland. (AP Photo/Hieu Dinh)



A boy wearing a face mask to protect against the coronavirus plays inside an inflatable tube at a public park in Beijing, Saturday, July 11, 2020. New coronavirus cases have dropped sharply in China, and authorities are turning their attention to concerns that the virus could spread through imported food. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)

Texas is among the U.S. states setting records for infections, virus hospitalizations and deaths almost daily after embarking on one of America's fastest reopenings. Republican Gov. Greg Abbott on Friday extended a statewide disaster as the state surpassed 10,000 hospitalized patients for the first time.

"Things will get worse," Abbott told Lubbock television station KLBK. "The worst is yet to come as we work our way through that massive



increase in people testing positive."

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