Understanding the genomic epidemiology of SARS-CoV-2 is essential in developing effective public health policy and control programs. Initial public health interventions delayed the onset of SARS-CoV-2 community transmission after the introduction of the virus from international and regional migration in Zimbabwe. The use of global whole genome sequence data was essential to reveal major routes of spread and inform the implementation of effective public health interventions for control in Zimbabwe. This undoubtedly saved lives and bought time for this resource limited healthcare system to increase capacity and devise strategies to combat the impending pandemic.

The objective of our talk will be to highlight the impact of COVID-19 in the African setting particularly in Zimbabwe at the onset of the pandemic. This will entail an analysis of the role of international and regional travel and the epidemiology (particularly response activities, hygiene practices, social distancing, role of vaccination, public perceptions, and the impact on other infectious disease management.)

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