

NATIONAL TREATMENT GUIDELINES FOR COVID-19 IN SOUTH AFRICA: EVOLVING RAPID REVIEW METHODS TO MEET NEEDS FOR EVIDENCE-INFORMED DECISION-MAKING

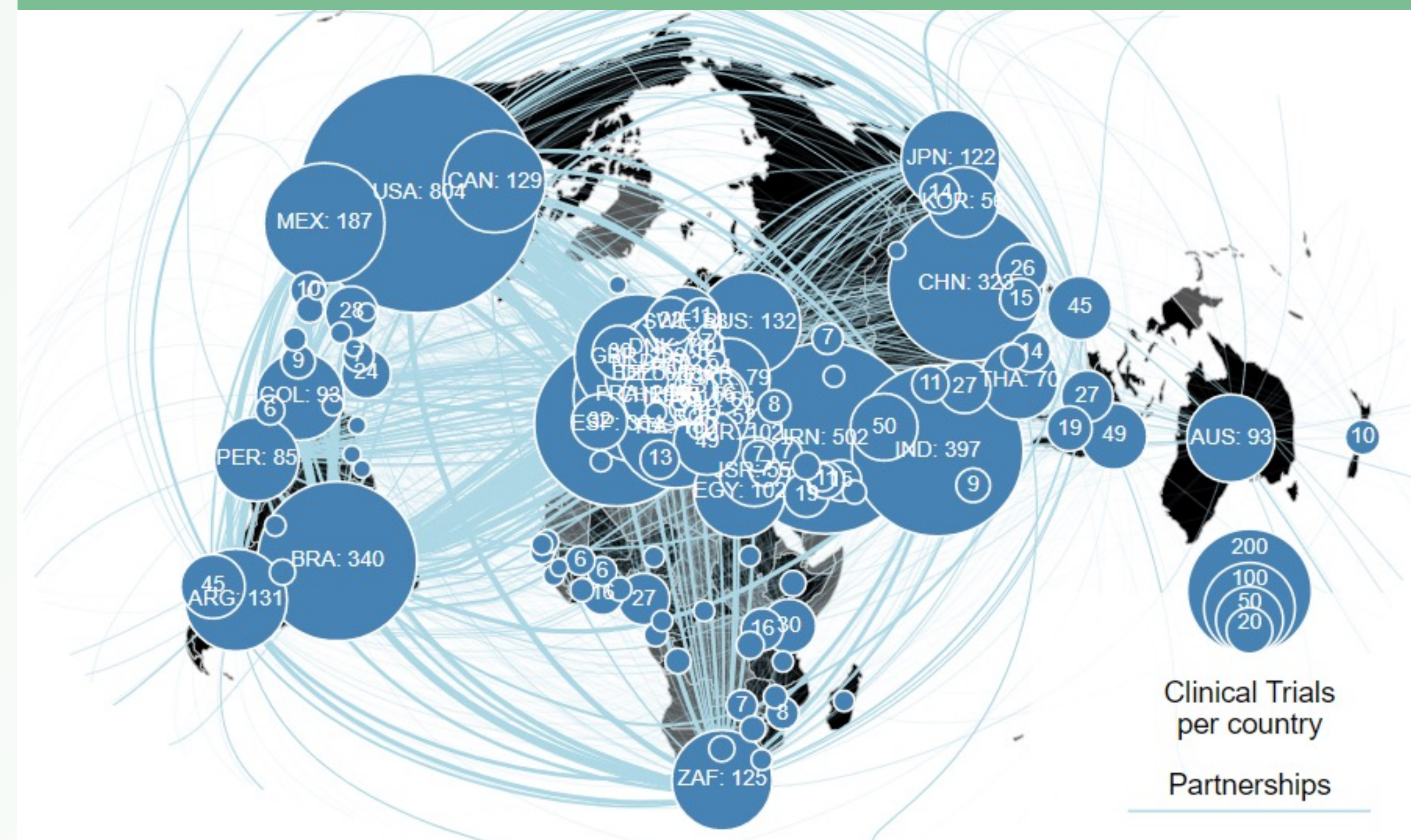
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BACKGROUND

The emergence of COVID-19 highlighted the importance of prompt access to high-quality evidence to inform COVID-19 management and medicine procurement decisions in South Africa (SA). Globally, an extensive array of rapidly emerging and evolving evidence for the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 was published, often in pre-print format and of variable quality.

LIVING MAP OF ALL CLINICAL RESEARCH TRIALS FOR COVID-19



As of 3 November 2022 the COVID-19 – living NMA initiative collected 4522 studies of treatments from the International Clinical Trials Registry Platform 1222 of these trials are recruiting patients

OBJECTIVE

To describe the evidence-informed decision-making processes for COVID-19 therapeutics in SA.

METHODOLOGY

The National Essential Medicines List-Ministerial Advisory Committee (NEML-MAC), within the National Department of Health (NDoH), collaborated with the SA GRADE Network, co-led by Cochrane SA and the Centre for Evidence-Based Health Care, to produce rapid evidence reviews, in order to inform the SA National COVID-19 treatment guidelines. The aim was to balance urgency with rigorous methods. The approach built on Cochrane's rapid review methodology adapted to meet the evidence requirements in SA (Prospero registration: CRD42021286710). Therapeutic questions arose from the NEML-MAC, scoping of databases and the NDoH. The NEML-MAC prioritised review questions and review teams including NEML-MAC and SA GRADE members conducted reviews. Reviewers searched for available evidence systematically, appraised the evidence quality, and summarised key findings. The NEML-MAC then made recommendations, using the GRADE Evidence to Decision (EtD) Framework, which were forwarded to NDoH to inform decision-making.

RAPID REVIEWS HAVE DIRECTLY SHAPED SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL GUIDELINES AND INFLUENCED PEOPLE'S HEALTH

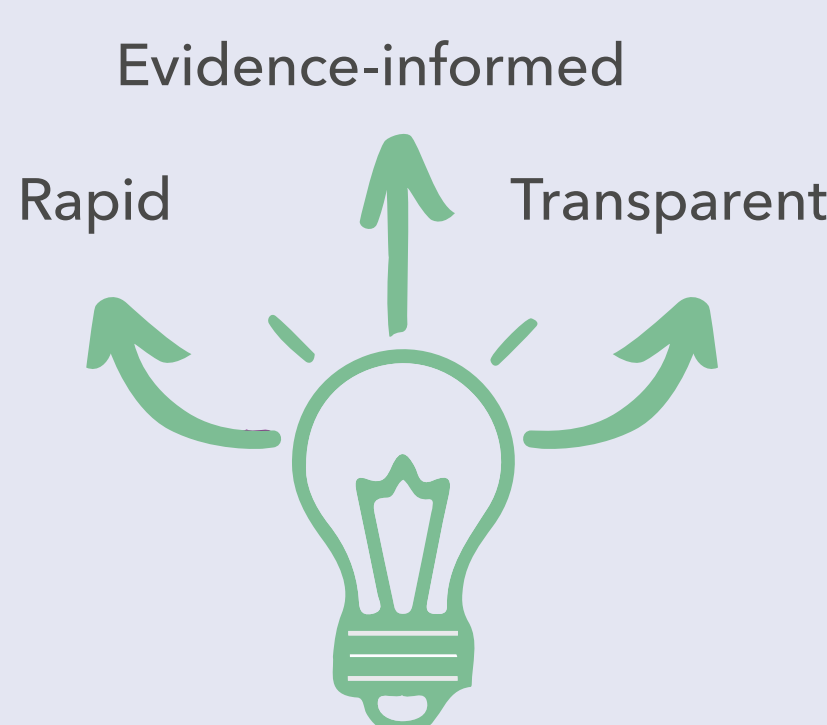
RESULTS

- The NEML-MAC completed 69 rapid review reports (including updates reflecting emerging evidence) and issued recommendations for 32 potential treatment or prevention options for COVID-19.
- Methods were developed for credible, transparent reporting and continue to evolve. We minimised duplication by partnering with global evidence producers (Cochrane France and the COVID-NMA initiative), adding contextual evidence for local decisions.
- All reviews and recommendations are made public on the NDoH website (<http://www.health.gov.za/covid-19-rapid-reviews/>).
- Knowledge translation efforts, such as disseminating key messages through infographics of rapid reviews are in development.
- Rapid reviews were presented in a number of webinars.

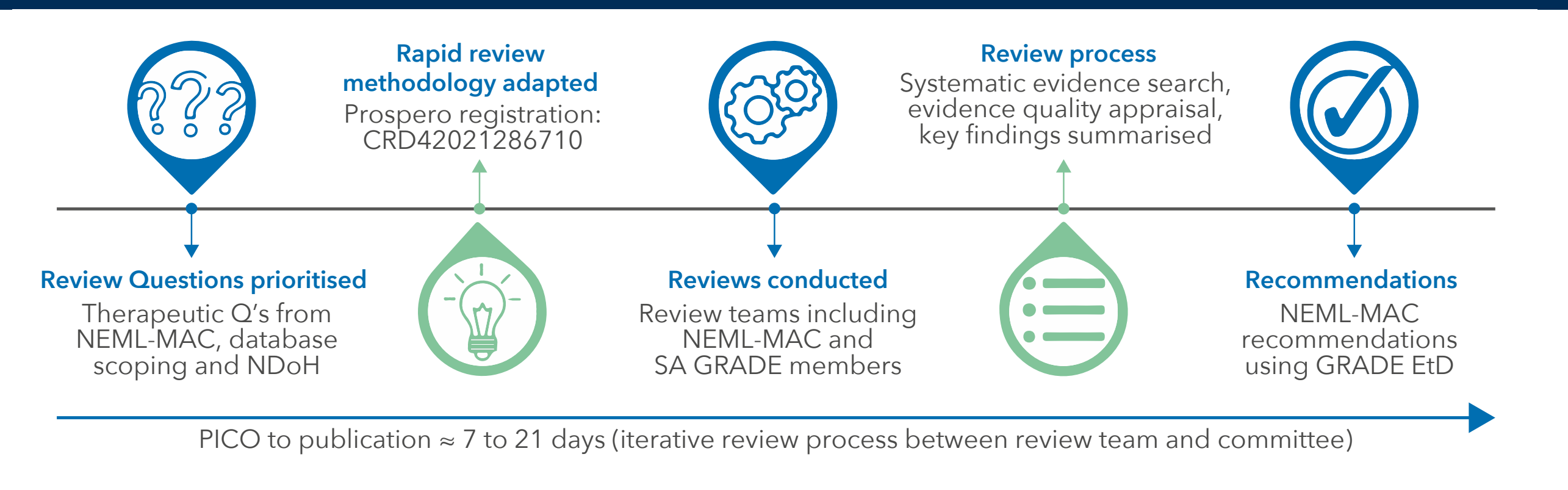
CONCLUSION

- Rapid evidence-informed decisions are possible by undertaking and using rapid review methods, with iterative real-time collaboration, and tapping into available local and global resources, such as living reviews.
- It is important to allow for consultation with stakeholders, despite the rapidity of the review process, to ensure that the reviews meet the needs of the people using them for national decision-making.
- Rapid, unbiased, transparent products can inform the formulation of national policy and assist clinicians on the frontline.

DECISIONS THAT ARE

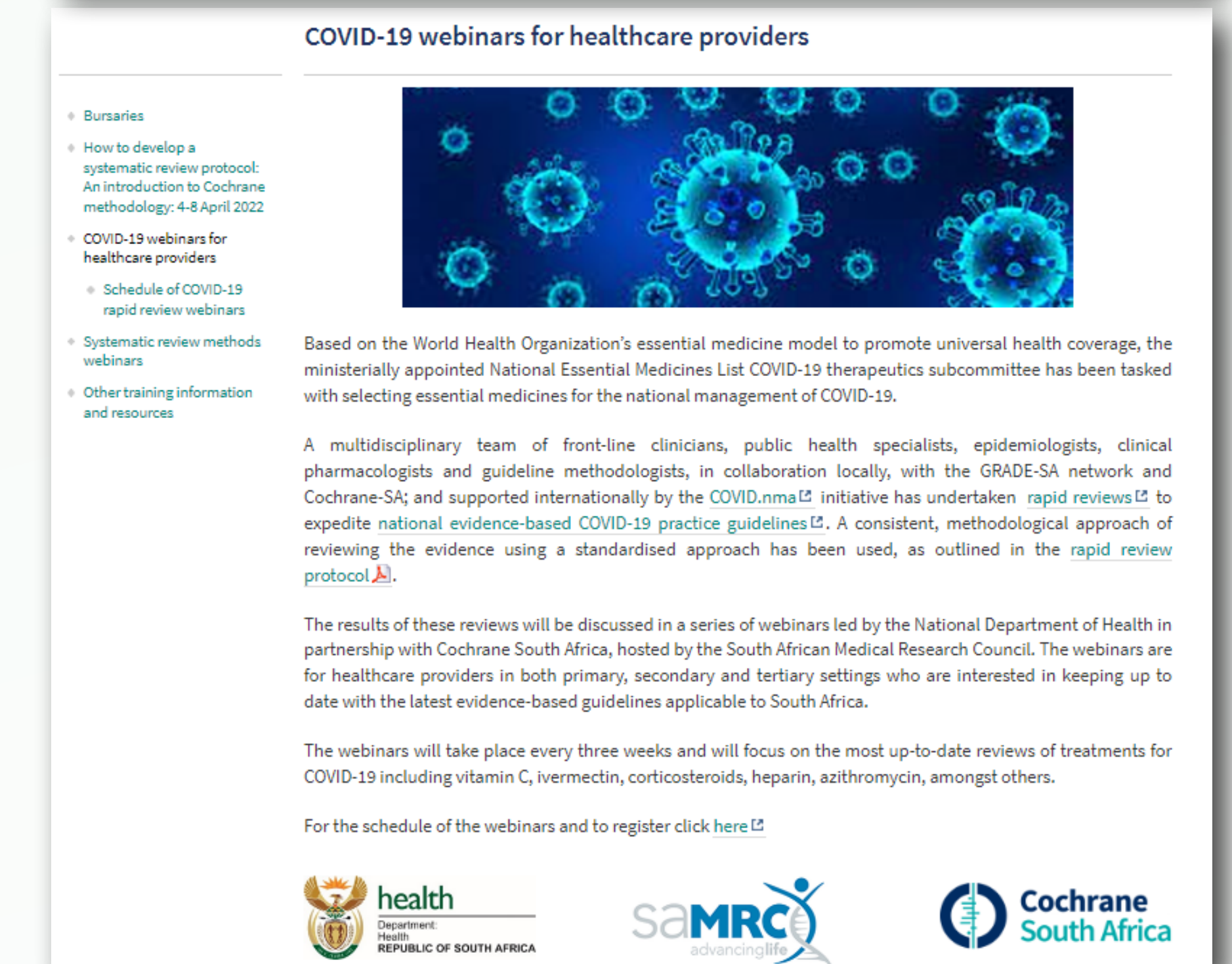
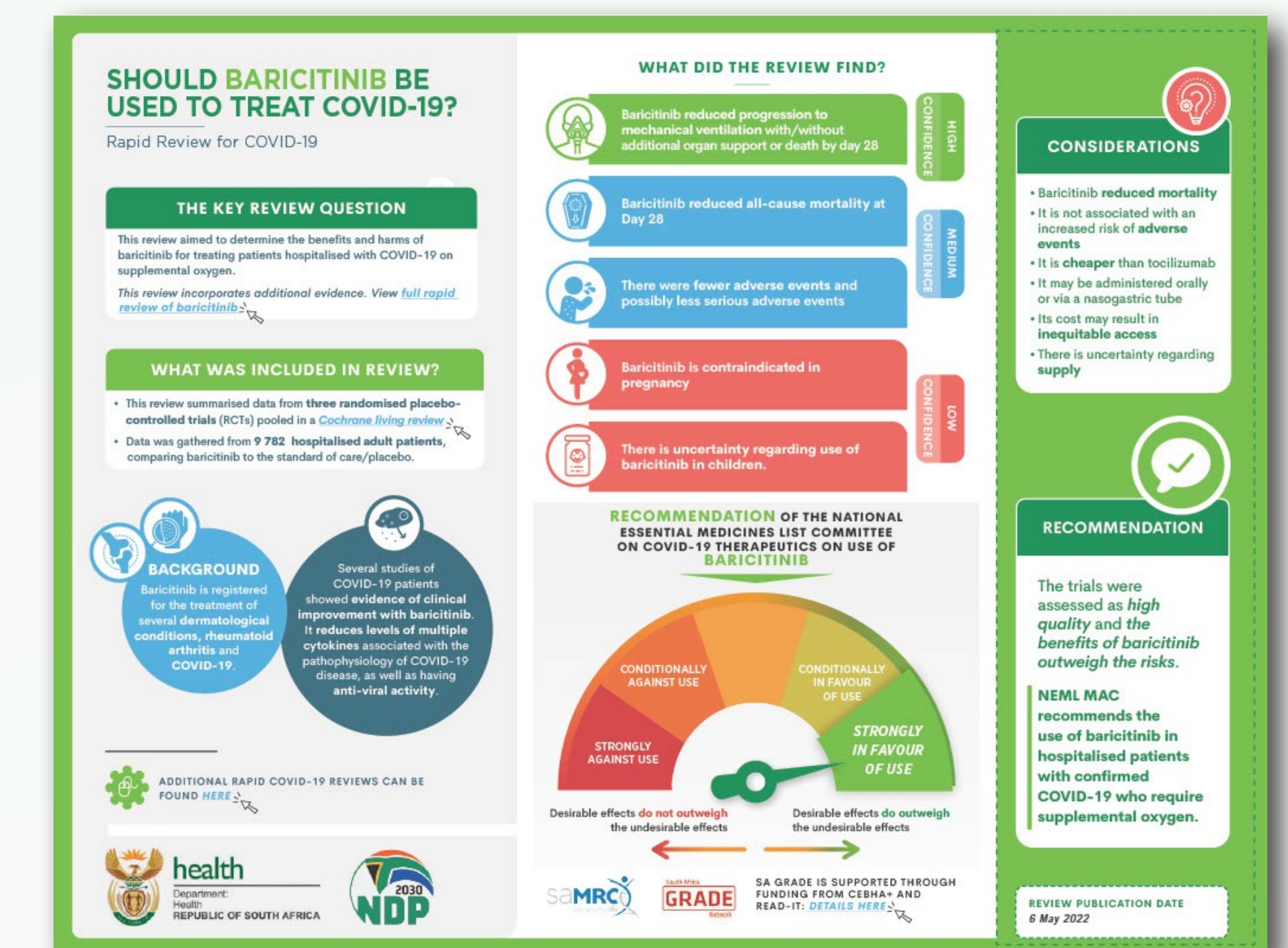


EVOLVING RAPID REVIEW METHODS



69 • Reviews & updates completed

32 • Therapeutics reviewed



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Cochrane SA and the South African Medical Research Council
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