

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Academia

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Abstract

The COVID-19 Pandemic has been impacting all aspects of life. Scientific publications related to the Pandemic flooded the professional literature. They reflect current focus of public interest as well as academic endeavors and funding. It is of interest when the acute short-term academic interest would give way to long-term pursuits.

Keywords: COVID-19; Stress; Academia; Research

It is apparent and well-understood that the COVID-19 Pandemic is of a world-wide concern. The Pandemic occupies attention of individuals, communities and governments, it has been guiding policy-makers decisions on all levels. International agencies, National governments, municipalities and public services have all been faced with the need to adapt to the crisis situation. Indeed, academic institutes needed to do their best in the new unpredictable reality.

Clinical investigators were overwhelmed by waves of patients who needed immediate interventions from day one. Clinicians had to shove to the sidelines any on-going activities and devote their full time to respond to emergencies. Of course, writing articles on previous research projects was in the bottom of priorities and had to be postponed for a later undetermined time. However, in cases where papers were already promised for specific deadlines, prospective authors had to spend precious time apologizing for delays while editors who were under pressure of production and publication time-lines were uncomfortable cajoling colleagues whom

they understood very well and with whom they identified. In many cases editors were under the same COVID-related pressures.

Frustrations of academics who work at basic sciences laboratories grew deeper with time because they had to disrupt and abandon their research endeavors in mid-way, oftentimes losing precious data. When laboratories are re-opening, rebuilding is a challenging experience especially for less-experienced investigators.

Funding is the driving engine of most academic endeavors. The Pandemic caused a dramatic shift in funding priorities and opportunities. The focus on the immediate COVID-19 issues has been reflected in new grants announcements enticing academic administrations and investigators to immediately apply for them. Even investigators and facilities that had different trajectories shifted directions toward "the new money fountains". The long-term impact of opportunistic shifts of directions on scientific productivity and quality is still to be assessed. It may be very positive and productive for laboratories who specialised in infectious diseases or epidemi-

ology any way. However, for laboratories or clinical facilities who have the technological knowledge, equipment and expertise but had to shift concepts and focus, future outcome is doubtful.

A promising future direction is illuminated by an increased realisation that the socio-economic and Behavioral impact of the pandemic may be broader and deeper than the immediate virus infection. The extended continuation of COVID-19 infection forces experts and the public to digest the fact that Public Health encompasses the entire multifaceted well-being of the populace, physical, behavioral, mental, financial, cultural and spiritual. Especially Pandemic-induced stress of individuals and communities has been identified as a longer-lasting consequence of wide-spread infections. Neurological symptoms may also persist longer than the general infection and may lead to chronic Neuro-behavioral and other Central Nervus System (CNS) disorders.

These developments are of importance to academic investigators. They provide for vehicles to educate policy decision-makers and lobby for sufficient funding. Interdisciplinary partnerships of academics, professional organizations, governments and consumers would make these endeavors more productive and beneficial to the public [1]. 'Together' is not just a political poetic slogan, it should be applied in academic reality.

The virus will eventually go away-until the next epidemic, the consequences are here to stay and they should be dealt with. The sooner the better.

Bibliography

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