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Short Communication

The after-effects of COVID-19 on academia and scientific community: Researchers perspective

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ABSTRACT

The commotion pandemic has caused has affected almost every aspect of the academic community. Distancing and issues related to the risk of spread have caused researchers to stop most of their most non-COVID clinical trials and experiments, causing a reduction in recruitment of research associates and a lag in data entry into clinical trial databases. Fresh graduates and research scholars who have not yet begun their doctoral research or postdoctoral fellowship are among the most who will endure the consequences. Few valuable crowdfunding options have surfaced to help fund effective scientific research that may otherwise not receive financial support. The institutes affected by the COVID-19 pandemic can seek extra financial aid to cover expenditures that arise from projects being delayed or derailed. The research community should raise awareness of the challenges faced by universities and researchers worldwide and clearly explain the need for action to prevent or limit any further unfavorable consequences.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed an extraordinary challenge to the scientific community all across the globe. The commotion pandemic has caused has affected almost every aspect of the research field. There have been instances where researchers have suspended their research work due to laboratories being inoperable and decreased access to research resources. There has been an unexpected switch to remote teaching and learning and modifications in assessment methods. Currently, the interest of the scientific community and resources are explicitly in COVID-19 research only. Most clinical trials, except those involving life-saving therapies, have been suspended, and most researchers have discontinued their projects for new enrollment. Distancing and issues related to the risk of spread have caused researchers to stop most of their most non-COVID clinical trials and experiments, causing a reduction in recruitment of research associates and a lag in data entry into clinical trial databases.[1–4]

Most of the international research teamwork, and clinical trials, including TB and HIV programs, have been stopped immediately till further guidelines in low-income nations that are already highly vulnerable to public health crises. The researchers and academia might not have experienced the same types of the financial crisis as other sectors, yet, one cannot claim that they are unaffected by this economic deadlock. Besides, restrictions on travel, and social distancing protocol, the decreased resources for funding have also affected the scientific community globally[5,6]

Furthermore, the mental health of the students and faculty has been affected due to an increase in domestic obligations and physical confinement due to lockdowns. These eventually resulted in the reduced time available to

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perform research and scientific writing.[6,7] Many authors have suggested that Scientists are reportedly spending considerably less time on research than prior to the Covid-19 era.

Currently, we cannot assess the extent of damage COVID-19 will cause to colleges and universities. In various countries, tuition-dependent institutions are the most vulnerable and hardest hit by the pandemic. It may either lead to the closing down or merging of these institutes in future.[8] Fresh graduates and research scholars who have not yet begun their doctoral research or postdoctoral fellowship are among the most who will endure the consequences. Therefore, it will be a wise decision; to have an alternative, preferably non-academic, as a backup for a safe career.[5]

2. Telecommunication, Crowdfunding Scientific Research, Availing External Funds

Based on the current scenario of COVID19, we cannot assume that this pandemic will end anytime soon. The only option left is to adapt and find ways to live through and stay creative. As any developing nation, India too suffered a severe setback as a result of COVID-19. In India the nationwide lockdown during the first wave has disturbed the teaching and examinations patterns in educational institutes drastically. Most of the teaching institutes were left with no choice but to online teaching. Manipulating and utilizing technology and social media to bring science and research directly into the domain of the general population will be decisive in the post-pandemic era. Teledentistry/telehealth in the teaching curriculum can serve as an excellent and economical tool in specialist training and new opportunities for medicos and dentists in the Covid-19 era. Such technology might involve procedures to allow the general public to invest in research and researchers.[9]

Crowdfunding for research and development is a new aspect that does bring hope, but many researchers are unsure about its drawbacks. The donations are made to the university rather than to individual researchers. The universities usually approve all the Fundable projects and share information about donation opportunities with their alumni. Researchers can submit an overview of their proposal and a summary to explain their expenses and research background. The research scholars can eventually receive the amounts assured by the contributors after achieving a specified target. Few valuable crowdfunding options have surfaced to help fund effective scientific research that may otherwise not receive financial support. But this financial assistance through crowdfunding networks is much less than grants secured from the government funding forums.[10,11] The universities or research institutes affected by the COVID-19 pandemic can seek extra financial aid from the government to provide allowances payments to research scholars and trainees who may be unable to work because of COVID-19 restrictions. Last but not least, the researchers can also sustain and enhance their motivation by participating in regular webinars and online conferences and through regular communications with other researchers. The research community should raise awareness of the challenges faced by universities and researchers worldwide and clearly explain the need for action to prevent or limit any further unfavourable consequences.

3. Conclusion

Although we cannot determine the overall repercussion of the COVID-19 pandemic on research and academic training, the present critical situation will inevitably influence the scientific community's functioning and education system for years to come. We hope that this pandemic will allow us to chart a new course for science, both academically and socially. We must begin to address the core challenges of research, focused mainly on supporting future researchers in their field and willing to participate in collaborative research. As researchers, we must emphasize the significant learning from the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing us to become more resilient with time.

4. Source of Funding

None

5. Conflict of Interest

None.

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