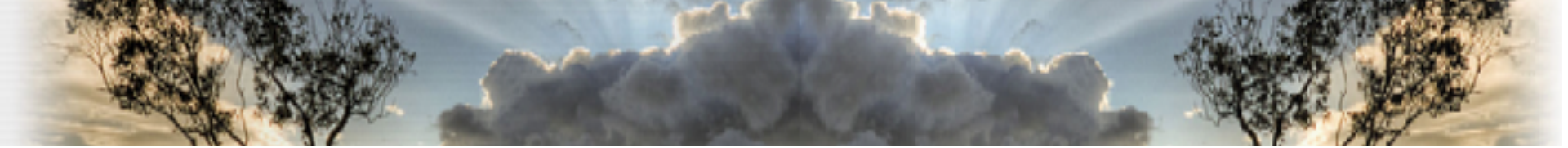

EBF Young Scientists

Science Café

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How has Covid-19 changed our future?
Past – Present – Future

Teaser (FB from survey) to get the round table started…

http://www. yss.e-b-f.eu

11th June 2021

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Part 1: Past

Looking back on the past year, has COVID-19 had positive or negative effects on your lab work?

“ I think this could be either depending on which way you look at it”

More planning required – improved efficiency vs additional work to plan

Social distancing – fewer people in the lab vs less space in the lab

Flexibility – more flexible about home working vs less flexible lab experiments

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Part 1: Past

Looking back on the past year, has COVID-19 had positive or negative effects on your lab work?

Those in an academic setting impacted more by closures

Reduction in research work

Delays in consumables delaying projects

Difficult for new starters – challenging to schedule training, missed introductions with team members

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Part 1: Past

Looking back on the past year, has COVID-19 had positive or negative effects on your team dynamics?

Dynamics have been affected by shift patterns, WFH, separation into breakout offices

- Created a gulf between different teams
- Easier to focus on work (vs. easier to over-work)
- Increased isolation for those home-working full-time (vs. better work/life balance)

Within teams online platforms have helped maintain a positive attitude

Huge loss to the social benefits to work – no team building events, casual knowledge sharing is lost

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Part 1: Past

Looking back on the past year, has COVID-19 had positive or negative effects on your personal development?

Opportunity in crises…

Opportunity to work more independently, demonstrate decision making and leadership skills

Some roles became available because of Covid

Greater availability of online courses and conferences

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Part 1: Past

Looking back on the past year, has COVID-19 had positive or negative effects on your personal development?

Lost opportunities to meet people and interact face to face at conferences

Online nature of e-conferences/course makes them less immersive

Loss of mentorship, due to reduced contact time with colleagues

Loss of secondment and cross training opportunities

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Part 2: Present

Have you experienced any delivery delays or stock shortages of lab consumables?

Overwhelming “Yes”

- Disposable PPE e.g. masks, gloves etc.
- Everything made of polystyrene
- Pipette tips
- Reagent troughs
- Assay kits
- Antibodies
- Reference standards
- 96-well plates

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Part 2: Present

How did you cope with supply shortages?

Use alternative suppliers

- Mixed results – lower quality pipette producing poorer results, additional validation required from some items

Prioritise and re-arrange workload

Communicate and borrow from other departments

Bulk buying when available to last for an entire body of work

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Part 2: Present
Additional Comments on Supply Issues

Price increase noted for available items

The “B Word” – scientists in the UK experienced delays potentially due to:

- Brexit or
- Covid or
- Brexit *and* Covid

Some labs had acquired pre-Brexit stock piles which helped with potential Covid shortages

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Part 2: Present

Is a communication gap between bench scientists and home-working project leads impacting project outcomes?

Majority felt they do not have a communication gap

Use of online platforms makes it easier (company and platform dependant!)

- Effort is made to increase regularity of meetings, communication pathways
- Rethinking and optimising decision making processes, allowing more independent working

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Part 2: Present

Is a communication gap between bench scientists and home-working project leads impacting project outcomes?

It can be a challenge to work with rapid turnaround projects, when decisions/outcomes needed to be discussed quickly

Email and calls aren't as effective as face-to-face discussions

- is leading to miscommunication and having incomplete information

In some cases technology initially kept communication open, but that people have became more disengaged over time

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Part 2: Present

How can we as young scientists encourage critical thinking and a science based approach in our interactions e.g. on social media?

Recognised to be a challenge

- Misinformation is spread quickly and indiscriminately
- It is often written in attention grabbing understandable language
- It takes far longer to explain why/how something is inaccurate

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Part 2: Present

How can we as young scientists encourage critical thinking and a science based approach in our interactions e.g. on social media?

What are young scientists doing?

Supporting and sharing reputable content online

Challenging misinformation with well sourced information

Giving friends and family guidance on reliable sources vs tabloid media

Encouraging critical thinking and encourage people to question held views

Part 2: Present

How can we as young scientists encourage critical thinking and a science based approach in our interactions e.g. on social media?

Improve how scientific concepts are communicated to the wider public – infographics, videos, animations

Do young scientists need to consider becoming more political?

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Part 2: Present

How can we as young scientists encourage critical thinking and a science based approach in our interactions e.g. on social media?

"So often we challenge misinformation with mockery"

Rather than being combative strive to be approachable, understanding, open

Try to better understand the other viewpoint

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Part 2: Present

Productivity in our current situation – optimal or bordering on burn-out?

No change for many

Decrease in productivity

- Shift working – decreased productivity due to irregular work hours, despite extended time at work
- Low morale, especially during lockdown period
- Lack of defined break periods/socialising decreased motivation
- External delays meant projects could not progress

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Part 2: Present

Productivity in our current situation – optimal or bordering on burn-out?

Increase in productivity/work

- More emails
- More meetings
- Fewer distractions
- Increased flexibility boosted productivity
- Increased opportunities caused by Covid increased productivity
- Nothing else to do!

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Part 3: Future

Are we now better prepared for a future pandemic?

Young Scientists are optimists…Yes

- Options for remote working/safe working now in place
- Familiar with the concept of social distancing/masks etc.
- A precedent has been set for the rapid development of vaccines, assessment of treatments
- Road map for improved co-operation between research organisations

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Part 3: Future

Are we now better prepared for a future pandemic?

It's not all rosy…

The YSS community have concerns about societal readiness for another pandemic

- Will the pandemic-fatigued public be as compliant?
- Have governments really learned anything, as some are slow to learn even between waves of this pandemic
- Depends on the type of pandemic…

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Part 3: Future

Do you believe this will affect the timelines for novel pharmaceuticals as a whole?

On the whole, “No”

These were extra-ordinary circumstances – the resources are not there to give every drug such a timeline

There was huge financial risk in a generally risk averse industry

Strong feeling by some that it **should not** accelerate drug development

- Could compromise safety, increase patient reluctance

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Part 3: Future

Do you believe this will affect the timelines for novel pharmaceuticals as a whole?

There can be lessons learned for future projects:

- Can learn which stages which can be made more efficient while maintaining safety
- Combining Phase I and Phase II where possible

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Part 3: Future

Do you think that patenting / IP protection (i.e. for vaccines) in a pandemic is appropriate or should they be open?

In a pandemic patient care and saving lives should the priority

Prevents one company having a monopoly on a treatment

Make feasible by:

- issuing production licenses
- Governments could partially fund in exchange for discounted pricing

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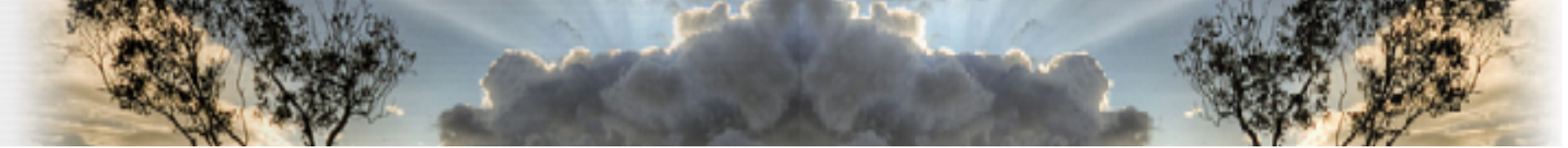
Part 3: Future

Do you think that patenting / IP protection (i.e. for vaccines) in a pandemic is appropriate or should they be open?

Who pays the bills? - stripping IP protection disincentivises companies from investing in drug development

Tighter control of productions keeps safety high

IP protection drives innovation - *"IP protection obliges you to search further which can lead to another (and maybe better) approach to help solve the problem"*



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Additional Question

Sustainability in the lab

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Sustainability in the lab

Did you get the chance to rethink the ideas from last years YSS on sustainability in the lab?

Was there an opportunity to establish/ come up with ideas for a more sustainable lab in your company?

Could you encourage your colleagues to be involved in a change?

Contact Information

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