



14th EBF Open Symposium
Science – Our Universal Language

How Covid-19 impacted our day to day work – learnings for the future

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The Past

Looking back on the past year, has COVID-19 had a 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

The Past

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

- Those in an academic setting impacted more by closures – less resources for research work, especially if clinical research
- Delays in consumables delaying projects
- Difficult for new starters – challenging to schedule training

The Past

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

- Increased time for research work and non fee earning initiatives
- Being trained in other techniques to fill gaps
- More time to brainstorm/troubleshoot making lab work more lean and effective beyond Covid
- Covid specific projects – doing something new, while contributing to public safety

The Past

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

- Huge loss to the social benefits to work
- Difficult for people in different areas to appreciate workloads of others leading to frustration
- Online platforms - hard to decipher tone in written communication, without verbal and facial cues of face to face
- New starters – difficult to integrate, understand place within the company

The Past

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

- Troubleshooting alone – a challenge but gave an opportunity to develop independent working skills
- Felt more trusted and more confident
- Gave opportunity to meet colleagues would not ordinarily have
- Attitudes to home working have shifted, now much more available

The 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

The Past

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

- Opportunity to work more independently, demonstrate decision making and leadership skills
- Some roles/opportunities became available because of Covid
- Greater availability of online courses and conferences – more accessible
- New focus on work/life balance and learning/development beyond career

The Present (rapidly becomes the past...)

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

- Overwhelming “Yes”
 - Cells arriving thawed after delayed shipping
 - Disposable PPE e.g. masks, gloves etc.
 - Control Matrix – ongoing issues
 - Pipette tips – ongoing, especially for automation
 - Reagent troughs
 - Assay kits
 - Antibodies
 - Reference standards
 - 96-well plates

- Logistics issues – fewer shipments, dry ice unavailable

The Present (rapidly becomes the past...)

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

Many felt they do not have a communication gap

- Challenge for rapid turnaround projects, when decisions need to be discussed quickly
- Email and calls aren't as effective as face-to-face discussions
- Technology initially kept communication open, but people have become more disengaged over time

The Present (rapidly becomes the past...)

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

- Misinformation is spread quickly and indiscriminately
 - Written in attention grabbing and accessible language

- Feels like fighting a losing battle, can lead to online conflict
 - Companies don't want employees to engage online

- Politicians/the media exacerbating the situation

- How do you explain difference of opinion/scientific nuance to the public?

The Present (rapidly becomes the past...)

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

- Support and share reputable content online
- Challenge misinformation with well sourced information
- Giving guidance on reliable sources vs tabloid media
- Encourage critical thinking and encourage people to question held views
- Increased effort by Universities to create webinars to the public

The Present (rapidly becomes the past...)

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

No change for many

➤ Decrease in productivity

- Irregular work hours
- Low lockdown morale
- Lack of breaks and socialising decreased motivation
- External delays
- Balance work/life/home-schooling

➤ Increase in productivity/work

- More emails and meetings
- Shift working improved efficiency
- Fewer distractions
- Improved WFH culture
- Covid specific projects - motivating
- Not having to commute

The Future

Are we now better prepared for a future pandemic?

Young Scientists are optimists...Yes

- Options for remote working/safe working now in place
- In Europe we're now familiar with the concept of social distancing/masks etc.
- We will take it more seriously now – it can happen here too!
- A precedent has been set for the rapid development of vaccines, assessment of treatments
- Road map for improved co-operation between research organisations

The Future

Are we now better prepared for a future pandemic?

The YSS community have concerns about societal readiness for another pandemic

- Will the pandemic-fatigued public be as compliant?
- How do leaders respond? (Some) Governments are being held accountable at the polls
- Depends on the type of pandemic...
- We need greater harmonisation between countries and communities

The 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 technology wasn't novel
- No shortage of volunteer subjects
- There was huge financial and reputational risk in a generally risk averse industry
- Strong feeling by some that it **should not** accelerate drug development
 - Could compromise safety, increase patient reluctance

The Future

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

There can be lessons learned for future projects:

- Shows what we're capable of
- Can lead to greater autonomy in decision making, which may expedite drug development
- Can learn which stages which can be made more efficient while maintaining safety e.g. combining Phase I and Phase II where possible

The 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 be 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
- Why can a company retain 100% IP if the development was tax-payer funded?

The 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? – Drug development is costly and it may not be possible for a company to absorb that loss and survive
- Stripping IP protection disincentivises companies from investing in drug development
- Onus should be on governments to negotiate contracts
- Tighter control of production keeps safety high

The Future

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

- Wealthier countries should not be able to hoard vaccines
- Should vaccines be provided at cost, rather than being profitable?
- Price vaccines based on %GDP so that developing nations are not locked out but aren't waiting for aid?
- 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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“Feedback from the Science Café at the 7th European Bioanalysis Forum Young Scientist Symposium”, Munday et al, Bioanalysis

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