

# EDITOR'S MESSAGE

## The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on medical research

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On March 11th, 2020, the World Health organization declared COVID-19 as a worldwide pandemic. More than two years later, the world is still dealing with ongoing cases on daily a basis. Over 6 million deaths were attributed to COVID-19. The world economy was paralyzed, borders were closed, and the healthcare system was put to the test. In addition to the heroic efforts of the medical teams, other soldiers were working behind the scenes relentlessly to develop vaccines and treatments to use in the war against the virus.

The vaccine implementation helped in decreasing the virus impact as we saw new variants with decreased virulence<sup>1</sup>. As vaccines continue to be developed, it is essential to take a look at the impact of the pandemic on medical research to understand some of the outcomes we are beginning to see now.

As expected with the emerge of the COVID-19 virus there was a surge in virology research. Hundreds of thousands of papers were published in 2020 and 2021 about the virus and its impact on every aspect of health and life<sup>2</sup>. While these numbers are expected to decline in 2022, we are beginning to see many reports highlighting the disruption caused by in the pandemic in other areas of medical research. A recent report by the American Association of Cancer Research, have shown that 99% of surveyed researchers indicated that the pandemic has disrupted their research and/or their clinical practice. The same report highlights similar effects on cancer screening and treatment<sup>3</sup>.

The pandemic also redefined clinical trials. In the early stages, recruitment was paused for many trials that were just starting. Follow up appointments were moved to telehealth, travel restriction was implemented and measures were taken to limit the spread of the virus. However, given the lack of knowledge of the virus transmission and it effects, there were paralyzing fears of spreading the virus among this vulnerable population of patients and their care givers<sup>4</sup>.

As we move forward, the research world continues to recover from the pandemic effects as researchers learn to carry out their experiments with many new regulations, hoping that will translate to clinical trials resumption and a return to full capacity research. This sentiment is echoed here at the Dalhousie Medical

journal as we look forward to more submissions after the marked decrease we observed during the pandemic.

### References

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