Correspondence

WHO principles speed up ethical sharing of pathogen genomic data

We are members of the World Health Organization (WHO) team that just announced its guidelines for the timely and equitable global sharing of pathogen genome data (see go.nature.com/3tbkchp). As we learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic, sharing genomic data is an important step that is in everyone's mutual interest.

Worldwide access to genomic sequences and large-scale analyses will arm us against infectious-disease threats by advancing the development of new diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines. The falling costs and enhanced speed and quality of whole-genome sequencing make this a realistic goal.

Timely sharing of high-quality pathogen genome data is crucial — for example, for stakeholders who require rapid local analysis to inform public-health decisions. The WHO principles will also encourage scientific collaboration and support the career development of scientists in all countries.

Data access, equity and capacity development must be considered alongside each other, along with local and contextual factors, ethics regulations and national and international laws. Submitters of pre-publication data should be explicit about whether they expect to retain any involvement in the use of the data, and different options should be available to help accommodate their needs.

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Remembering India's pioneer in life-saving cholera treatment

Dilip Mahalanabis, the earliest practitioner of vital oral rehydration therapy, died last month aged 87. His research into diarrhoeal diseases saved the lives of millions of people, including huge numbers of vulnerable infants.

When the war that led to Bangladesh's independence broke out in 1971 in what was then East Pakistan, Calcutta (now Kolkata) in India saw a huge influx of refugees. Trained as a paediatrician, Mahalanabis attended these refugee camps as a researcher into cholera and other diarrhoeal diseases at the Johns Hopkins Center for Medical Research and Training in Kolkata. Quickly realizing the inefficacy of intravenous saline for treating cholera, he administered oral rehydration salts instead. The camps' morbidity rate soon fell from 30% to 3.6% (see D. Mahalanabis *et al. WHO South-East Asia J. Public Health* **1**, 101–112; 2012).

Word spread, and oral rehydration medication entered the World Health Organization's list of life-saving medicines. Mahalanabis eventually became director of clinical research at the prestigious International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research in Dhaka, Bangladesh (*Bull. World Health Org.* **87**, 91–92; 2009).

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Psychedelic drugs: more emphasis on safety issues

Psychedelic drugs have safety issues that are linked with effects such as hallucinations, paranoia and mood changes. In our view, your editorially independent articles on these drugs — sponsored by the biotechnology firm Atai Life Sciences — should have given more attention to such concerns to avoid serving an industry-friendly narrative that could do more harm than good (see www.nature.com/collections/edcbibiadj).

For example, the article on psilocybin for pain relief (*Nature* **609**, S100–S102; 2022) notes that researchers are trying to avoid the mistakes that contributed to the opioid crisis. But there are strong parallels: prescription of psychedelics and of opioids is rising as a result of aggressive marketing, whereas the evidence for effectiveness comes mostly from small, short-term trials involving highly selected patients in secure settings, without adequate comparators. And attention to safety issues such as tolerance and drug dependence is crucial, particularly over the long term.

The US Food and Drug Administration has designated many psychedelics as a 'breakthrough therapy', in effect lowering the bar for approval. Esketamine, for example, was controversially approved for treatment-resistant depression without adequate monitoring to assess its long-term harm-to-benefit ratio (E. H. Turner *Lancet Psychiatry* **6**, 977–979; 2019).

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Linked research hubs train students to tackle societal challenges

Rapid and equitable global change means that students in a wide range of disciplines must learn to synergize with researchers, international partners and extra-academic stakeholders. To help achieve this transdisciplinary training, the European Union's co-funded CHARM-EU university alliance (www.charm-eu.eu) has created a joint master's degree programme known as Global Challenges for Sustainability.

As part of this programme, students are asked to address important societal problems. They frame and research their hypotheses from a range of perspectives, communicating and collaborating through an international network of CHARM-EU research hubs that comprise local scientists, experts and stakeholders.

How the world might deal with future pandemics is one example that we set. Research hubs in Barcelona, Dublin and Budapest provided input on medicine and global health, population health and behaviour, and stress management, respectively. Students were assessed on their transdisciplinary collaborations, creative problem-solving and communication skills — all considered key to tackling future challenges.

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