Science in the time of COVID-19

There is no business-as-usual during this uniquely challenging time. Here is what we are doing to help the scientific community both in providing much needed evidence to guide policy and in managing the personal impacts of the pandemic on individual researchers.

Despite early warnings, the pandemic has caught many governments flat-footed. The UK government, for instance, was initially reluctant to implement strict measures to contain the spread of COVID-19, apparently concerned that, if measures were implemented too early, citizens may tire of the restrictions and be tempted to ignore them when they are most needed. But the government did not share the evidence basis for this 'behavioural fatigue' theory—and an Open Letter signed by nearly 700 UK behavioural scientists (<https://sites.google.com/view/covidopenletter/home>) questioned the validity and scientific evidence supporting the decision.

The behavioural and social sciences community has rapidly responded to the crisis by sharing insights from the existing literature and, importantly, by mobilizing swiftly to collect new, directly applicable evidence to guide policy and assist individuals, communities and governments in managing the pandemic. As a journal, we are fully supportive of these efforts.

We made an early call for robust empirical research on COVID-19 that has a behavioural angle and policy relevance, committing to efficient turnaround times. Here is how we handle COVID-19-related submissions:

- We respond to initial research manuscript submissions that were designed to address questions directly related to the pandemic within 24 h in most cases, making rapid decisions on whether a paper is suitable for peer review with us, to enable authors to promptly seek alternative outlets if not.
- We expedite the peer review process of all COVID-19 research submissions. We are extremely grateful to all reviewers who have already provided rapid feedback on COVID-19-related submissions, as well as to reviewers who consider or accept our invitations for rapid peer review in coming months. We wouldn't be able to expedite the peer review process of time-critical research without your support. Although we understand that many reviewers will be unable to help, we genuinely appreciate your considering our invitations.
- We aim to reach a first post-review decision on regular Articles or Resources within 10 calendar days from the time of submission.
- For Registered Reports, we have joined an initiative spearheaded by Christopher D. Chambers, Registered Reports Editor at *Royal Society Open Science* (<http://neurochambers.blogspot.com/2020/03/calling-all-scientists-rapid-evaluation.html>), and strive to complete Stage 1 protocol review within 7 calendar days from receipt. To assist authors with the preparation of their protocols, we have created a template for Stage 1 Registered Reports (https://www.nature.com/documents/NHB_Template_RR_Stage1.docx) that specifies all information that needs to be included to facilitate rapid peer review.
- If you are in the process of planning or collecting data for a COVID-19-related project that you think may be suitable but the full manuscript isn't quite ready yet, please do send us a presubmission enquiry to humanbehaviour@nature.com. We will respond as quickly as possible.
- Springer Nature has signed a joint statement committing to ensure that

Credit: Dowell / Moment / Getty

research findings and data relevant to this outbreak are shared rapidly and openly to inform the public health response and help save lives (<https://wellcome.ac.uk/press-release/sharing-research-data-and-findings-relevant-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>). If you decide to submit your research to us and we take it forward to peer review, we require preprint deposition and immediate release of data, code and protocols associated with your paper in recognized community repositories. In order to proceed with peer review, we also need to share research findings relevant to the outbreak with the World Health Organization (WHO). We will do this on your behalf. (For Registered Reports, these requirements apply at Stage 2 submission.)

- We also expedite the processing and peer review of particularly time-critical non-research content (e.g., narrative reviews, perspectives, comments) that has immediate policy relevance.
- We have created a dedicated COVID-19 channel on our Behavioural & Social Sciences online community

(<https://socialsciences.nature.com/>) for immediate posting of timely comment and opinion.

- All COVID-19-related content we publish in the journal, both research and non-research, is made freely available on publication and will remain so for the duration of the pandemic.

Of course, we continue to welcome non-COVID-19 related submissions, and we are doing everything we can to process these submissions as quickly as possible. Nonetheless, we understand that many of

our reviewers are unable to return their comments as quickly as usual and that authors may be unable to complete revisions of their manuscripts while the pandemic is ongoing. Universities in many countries are closed or may soon close; many scientists no longer have access to their laboratories and may not be able to complete their research projects; school and day-care closures mean that many of you need to juggle remote working, online teaching and childcare or caring for other loved ones.

We continue to send reviewer invitations and reminders as usual for all our

manuscripts, but we are highly flexible at this time, so do let us know if you need more time to complete your review. If revisions on your manuscript are impossible to complete on the specified timeline, we are happy to extend deadlines without any impact on the consideration process.

These are extraordinary times that require an extraordinary response. We stand ready to support the scientific community in every way we can. □

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