## Description

The current COVID-19 pandemic is in the spotlight. Funding cuts due to the global crisis has affected medical research areas such as cancer, dementia, and cardiovascular diseases. Clinical trials have been put on hold and trained medical staff have been reallocated either to care for COVID-19 patients or assist in COVID-19 testing. This has put a major burden on the resources available for non-COVID-19 related healthcare.

# Pandemics are Expensive

One way or another, pandemics cause enormous economic costs. Therefore, funders have been mindful of the impact of COVID-19 on research and are finding ways to mitigate any financial impact to continue their programs. Organizations such as Wellcome and the UK Royal Society are extending research deadlines as well as providing extra financial support to projects delayed due to COVID-19.

# Charity-Funded Research Hit Hard

Unfortunately, charity-funded research has taken a knock. Nonprofits such as Cancer Research UK (CRUK) and the British Heart Foundation (BHF) are dealing with a massive loss in income. Nonprofits had to temporarily close their charity shops and cancel major fundraising events, both major sources of income. This is devastating for medical research.

# Medical Research Funding Cuts

More than 150 health charities are facing drastic cuts in income. The effect of this loss of income is going to disrupt and delay many aspects of the scientific ecosystem. The CRUK is expecting their income to drop by 30% this year. The setback for cancer research as well as patients will be huge. Researcher's cancer fighting ideas will be unfunded, early researchers will be unsupported, and new clinical trials will have no funds to go ahead. This will put the CRUK's vision of helping three out of four people beat cancer under threat.

Similarly, the British Heart Foundation expects their income to drop by up to 50% this year with the same impact on their research as the cancer researchers. This is not good news for people with heart

and circulatory diseases. It is uncertain how long it will take to recover from this loss and it is possible that a generation of scientists could be lost due to this lack of funding.

Another research group struggling to keep their heads above water with the finance cuts is the Alzheimer's Society. It is estimated that their finances will take four-and-a-half years to recover from the loss of income due to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the effect on patients and individual scientists, the interruption of medical research could slow down extremely competitive research fields. Any loss in productivity could give competing laboratories or countries the gap they need to get ahead in the field.

# Training Wheel Grants

Nonprofits make a vital contribution to science. They are known as "training wheel grants" because they often fund smaller, high-risk, pilot studies. This enables research groups with novel ideas to collect the necessary data that they need for larger government funding applications.

CRUK is expecting to cut funding by £150m per year. This loss is equivalent to 10 years of clinical trials, at a time, when COVID-19 has such a big impact on cancer patients. Although the UK government has provided financial support to nonprofits, it is not available for medical research. In cases where alternative funding is arranged, project delays may extend them past foreign researcher's visas.

# Potential Strategies to Overcome Financial Losses

Approach your research funders for an extension to your research if it has been disrupted by COVID-19. Not being able to carry out laboratory-related research for several months will prevent projects from being completed on time.

Approach your research institution for help. Many have made funds available to assist with aspects of research such as salaries.

Plead to your Government for help. Some countries have emergency funds for times of crisis. Help could be available in the form of salary subsidies and unemployment claims.

"It is imperative that the Government urgently works with medical research charities to come to a solution, so that decades of investment in UK research is not lost in a matter of months." — Michelle Mitchell, Cancer Research UK's chief executive.

# Role of Individuals to Raise Funding

If all else fails, go online. Charity shops can sell or auction their goods using online platforms such as Facebook. In fact, several charity shops already exist on Facebook. Facebook marketplace makes this easy to set up.

It is possible to hold online fundraising events. While this may lack the glamour of an evening out, many patrons are happy to help organizations in need and would welcome some form of online

entertainment such as online games and concerts.

Crowd funding is also an option. A plea for help from the public might just bring in enough funds to cover shortfalls.

Another example is to raise money through online activities such as marathons or running 5 km every day for 5 days. People will welcome the exercise challenge during this period when many are struggling to keep up with their exercise routines.

It may even be possible to apply for Venture Capital Funds. These are usually awarded to start-ups, but who knows, you may just convince someone to fund your research that has the potential to become a start-up.

# If You Can't Beat Them, Join Them

If it is possible to adapt your research proposal to include COVID-19, you may be able to apply for COVID-19 research grants. A quick online search will reveal several grants that you can apply to. Medical research fields covered are vast ranging from COVID-19 mental health associated research to Artificial Intelligence related to COVID-19.

COVID-19 has changed the way we will work in the future. It is time to think creatively about securing funding for your future research. The good news is that if you look hard enough, you may find ways to secure the funding you need to keep your medical research going.

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