Correspondence

COVID-19: research after the pandemic

As universities worldwide close their doors against the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers are facing uncertainty over their work and employment contracts. Early-career researchers and new principal investigators (PIs) are likely to be particularly affected because delayed research programmes put their career prospects on hold. As board members of the Young Academy of Europe, we urge institutions, governments and funders to clarify how they intend to protect this vulnerable group during these difficult times.

Several funders have announced that they will consider extensions beyond the original project end-date for research that is delayed as a result of the pandemic, but with no extra funding ('no-cost' extensions'). Among them are the Royal Society (go.nature.com/3bjvt9b) and the biomedical funding charity Wellcome (go.nature.com/3aeu18t) in the United Kingdom, the German Research Foundation (go.nature.com/2x34hh1; in German) and the Swedish Research Council (go.nature.com/3dmebpz).

We now urgently need a commitment to 'costed' extensions, which supplement a project's original budget, for PhD students, postdocs and new PIs. This will allow them to secure the delivery of their research programmes once the situation returns to normal — and ensure that their research portfolios can prosper in the post-COVID-19 world.

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COVID-19: protect Indigenous peoples

History indicates that Indigenous peoples in the Amazon region could be particularly severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, for example, their death rate was 4.5 times higher than in Brazil's general population (G. La Ruche *et al. Euro Surveill.* **14**, 51–56; 2009). Moreover, vaccination against H1N1 failed to protect an Indigenous community in 2016 (A. M. Cardoso *et al. PloS ONE* **14**, e0218925; 2019). To track infection sources and safeguard these vulnerable people, we need data on COVID-19 to be disaggregated by ethnicity.

Information on strategies that Indigenous people have adopted against previous disease outbreaks is sparse. Some Indigenous leaders in Peru decided on 13 March to close their lands to people from outside their communities until COVID-19 is under control; two days later, the Peruvian president shut the country's borders. These Indigenous social-governance systems should be respected and the communities kept informed of potential health-improvement measures.

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Boost diversity of prizewinners

Given the benefits that awards and prizes bring to scientific careers, a series of workshops held by the Australian Academy of Science for early- and mid-career researchers has identified ways to improve diversity among recipients (go.nature.com/39j5yus).

The system for awarding prizes and medals currently perpetuates a stereotypical view of successful scientists that can discourage applications from minority groups. Advertising needs to be reframed — for example, awardees with diverse backgrounds could be showcased, and language used should be more targeted. The focus should be on demonstrated research excellence, rather than on vague, subjective qualities described as 'outstanding' and 'distinguished'.

Current selection methods are based on a conventional linear career path, further limiting the diversity of prize recipients. It would encourage a wider range of applicants if age restrictions were removed, along with the detailed assessment of career interruptions (such as those due to carer responsibilities).

Making assessment panels more diverse can itself promote diversity among award recipients (A. James *et al. R. Soc. Open Sci.* **6**, 190633; 2019). Evaluation could also be broadened beyond standard research metrics to include mentoring and outreach, as well as industry and policy engagement, teaching, advocacy and committee service.

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Inclusive science: ditch archaic terms

To increase inclusivity in science, we should avoid long-held descriptors for non-human organisms that could cause offence to some sectors of society. The explosion in citizen science and in science blogs ensures that the continued use of such terminology will come to the attention of people who find it hurtful.

One example is the expression 'she-male', long used to describe female mimicry by male garter snakes (R. Shine *et al. Nature* **414**, 267; 2001). Another is 'sneaky mating strategy' (see, for example, G. A. Parker *Proc. R. Soc. B* **242**, 127–133; 1990), which could be misinterpreted as endorsing conventional sex roles. And scientists continue to refer to 'dwarf' males in behavioural ecology (F. Vollrath *Trends Ecol. Evol.* **13**, 159–163; 1998), long after society in general abandoned the word as derogatory.

Language evolves, so terms applied in one situation can acquire different connotations over time. Moreover, attitudes are shaped by language, which itself can shape data interpretation (see, for example, J. D. Monk *et al. Nature Ecol. Evol.* **3**, 1622–1631; 2019).

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