

Call to action: supporting evidence responses to global health emergencies

1 THE PROBLEM COVID-19 has created an unprecedented focus on health evidence for people working in governments, businesses and non-governmental organizations as well as members of the public.

Through Cochrane Convenes, a series of roundtable discussions involving healthcare policy makers, researchers, funders, journalists, science communicators and consumer representatives from around the world, it has become clear that:

- the evidence response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been inequitable – both in terms of the focus of the evidence, who has been producing it and who it reaches
- our methods, tools and processes have been pushed to their limits in trying to answer questions at the speed demanded
- in the face of an infodemic, we have struggled to communicate scientific uncertainties and gain trust for the evidence available.

2 NEED FOR CHANGE

Urgent action needs to be taken to ensure that the evidence community is adequately prepared to respond to future global health emergencies.

Some changes could be implemented quickly and could help with addressing the ongoing pandemic. Others will need to be done over a longer period and will also be used in ‘peacetime’.

3 CALL TO ACTION

We call on you to join with us and help to build an evidence system which we can all trust, that caters for all users of evidence wherever they are in the world, and which is better prepared for the next global health emergency.

Cochrane, together with partners, aims to lead on:

- building a case for support to secure funding for evidence synthesis units in low- and middle-income countries to help redress global imbalance
- strengthening of tools, methods, processes and relationships to ensure a rapid and relevant evidence response at national and global levels for the next global health emergency.
- investing in science communications:
 - building the capacity of the Cochrane community to communicate uncertainty (through webinars, social media campaigns, how-to guides)
 - improving and being more proactive about science communication

We call on our partners to prioritize the following.



FUNDERS

- Identify, prioritize and fund national and international research needs and address inequities
- Fund evidence generation, communication, networks and infrastructure in low- and middle-income countries



POLITICIANS

- Demand evidence and be about how (and what) evidence is used in decision making
- Hold those deliberately creating and sharing mis/disinformation to account



RESEARCH COMMUNITY

- Support research transparency and data sharing
- Be alert to, and raise the alarm about, fraudulent studies
- Improve communication about uncertainty and the evolving nature of the evidence
- Learn what works in communicating uncertainty, generating trust in evidence and countering mis/disinformation