

Special Issue on the COVID-19 pandemic: Global health policy and technology responses in the making



Discussion/Further Information

Countries examined in the Special Issue include:

| | | | |
|-----------|----------|-------------|--------------------------|
| Austria | Colombia | Ireland | South Korea |
| Australia | Ecuador | Italy | Spain |
| Belgium | Finland | New Zealand | Sweden |
| Brazil | France | Nigeria | Switzerland |
| Canada | Germany | Norway | the Netherlands |
| Chile | Greece | Peru | United Kingdom* |
| China | Iceland | Singapore | United States of America |

* Discusses the devolved administrations of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

For the full list of papers visit: <https://vhpuon.wixsite.com/covidsspecialissue>

A global snapshot

Policy and technology responses are examined from Australia, where researchers have recommended an Economic Pandemic Response Plan to aid the economy and the healthcare sector when facing pandemics or economic shocks, to South Korea, which is commended for its technologically innovative response to the pandemic.

In Spain, the main measure to contain the spread of the pandemic was a stringent confinement policy enforced through fines - its impact on the economy was examined. In Latin America, despite many countries being quick to implement stringent COVID-19 measures, high informal employment and social inequality undermined the effectiveness of countries' responses to the pandemic. The grouping of New Zealand, Iceland, Greece and Singapore are compared for their ability to control the pandemic at an early stage in terms of total number of positive cases.

"There was no right or wrong response, every country was dealing with the unknown and each country had different circumstances to respond to," Professor Paolucci said.

Australia: An Economic Pandemic Response Plan required

Professor Paolucci said that Australia performed well internationally in terms of health outcomes related to COVID-19 by enforcing prolonged lockdown policies, however the Australian economy suffered, and will continue to suffer for the foreseeable future. The Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for COVID-19 engaged mostly with the health sector and health authorities, while it is auspicious the discussions going forward would explicitly address the economic and social consequences of COVID-19, in particular among vulnerable groups.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is a stress test for Australian resilience and it brought into sharp focus that Australia like most countries has fragilities which challenge its preparedness for inevitable future pandemics,” Professor Paolucci said.

“Infectious disease experts have stated that pandemics will occur with increasing frequency in the future with ranging severity; it is important that the economic lessons that can be learned do not dissipate into a repertoire of forgetfulness.”

“We consider that the swift fiscal and monetary responses were necessary and broad albeit left some sectors and workers out (eg. higher education), and that Australia should continue to develop and improve existing systems that would facilitate proactive responses in future crises.”

The research team has recommended that lessons from the first stage of the current pandemic be used to develop a scalable Australian Economic Pandemic Response Plan (AEPRP) to be developed and used alongside the already well-established Health Pandemic Response Plan.

“To make the economy resilient to global shocks, we recommend the development of an Australian Economic Resilience Plan (AERP). These plans should be used in conjunction to protect the economy from future global pandemics,” Professor Paolucci said.

[Read the Australia article here.](#)

South Korea: Using innovation to battle COVID-19

South Korea was one of the first countries other than China to record a COVID-19 case and while the country had experienced a dramatic increase in confirmed cases in the early stages of the global pandemic, the government was able to quarantine the spread.

The steep decline of new cases in South Korea has been credited to the aggressive strategies that the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) put in place since the first patient was confirmed in January 2020.

In this country specific paper researchers, Dr Doowon Lee and Dr Bobai Choi, from the Newcastle Business School at the University of Newcastle said that the mixture of fast and easily accessible diagnostic tests and technologies used for contact tracing have been hailed as the two main factors to dampening the spread.

“The innovative technology used by South Korea has been adapted by other countries and the results from this and from expediting policies that were crucial in overcoming the virus should be of strong interest to policy makers around the world in implementing an infectious disease response strategy,” Dr Lee said.

The researchers highlighted a series of innovations such as 1) Full contact tracing and rapid testing with a 12 hours turnaround and 10 minutes movement tracking systems, 2) transparent disclosure of all contract tracing data to the public through a central database, 3) Drive-Through and Walk-Through testing methods, and 4) a 4 tier patient severity index and community treatment isolation centres.

[Read the South Korea report here.](#)

Court Innovations and access to Justice in times of crisis

COVID-19 has disrupted not only the health sector but also justice systems. Courts around the world have had to respond quickly to the challenges presented by the pandemic and the associated social distancing restrictions. This has created significant challenges for the justice system and such challenges are likely to be further compounded in the post-pandemic era as there is a 'tsunami' of COVID- 19-related disputes predicted.

In taking an in-depth analysis of how global court responses have transitioned from being primarily traditional, face-to-face proceedings to online court processes Professor Tania Sourdin from the University of Newcastle's Law School said that the research team found that online modes of dispute resolution, often referred to as Online Dispute Resolution (ODR), can promote resolution while facilitating social distancing in this new COVID-era.

"However, despite the benefits of providing greater access to justice brought by technological innovation, there are concerns about the use of such technologies in justice system, including how to safe- guard the rights of vulnerable social groups and manage the disruptions to justice caused by some innovations," Professor Sourdin said.

The research team has concluded that courts should embrace newer technologies that support court services while being mindful of possible tech-related issues that can impact on justice objectives.

"By placing further emphasis on alternative dispute resolution methods and ODR into the future, this might offset the likely tsunami of COVID-related litigation which would enable courts, hospitals, medical professionals and patients to settle disputes in a just, equitable and more efficient manner," Professor Sourdin said.

[Read court innovations article here](#)

Need for upskilling professionals

Even before the current health crisis there was a growing demand both nationally and internationally for expertise in health leadership and management, policy and governance and economics and evaluation, which prompted the University of Newcastle to endorse a new suite of postgraduate programs of [Health Economics, Management and Policy](#) in 2019. The courses will launch in 2021.

"Effective leadership and an understanding on the economics and governance of health policies are vital to solving a range of complex challenges within the health care sector," Professor Paolucci said.

"The current jobs market is driving demand for specialists who can create value from health data, and the program will equip graduates with the ability to respond innovatively to these challenges."

"The Special Issue demonstrates the vast amount of data (such as health care, health systems, economy) that is available and valuable in the decision-making process for COVID-19. Each government is currently collecting an astonishing amount of data in order to make more informed decisions."

"For policy makers, being able to filter relevant information within and across countries is important, as there are lessons to be learned from our own and other countries' responses to the pandemic."



FIND AN EXPERT - TRY OUR [ONLINE SEARCH TOOL](#)