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## Letter to the Editor

## COVID-19 experience reports: an emerging trend in scholarly communication



The current coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has unprecedentedly affected most parts of the world and has once again proved that humans are still vulnerable. However, unlike other pandemics that the world has encountered, this time we are at an advantage as almost everyone is aware of the entire situation as it evolves. This can be attributed to the established and swift communication methods that are in place for sharing information.

These communication methods need to be appropriately used as interactions between countries that are in different phases of the pandemic are of extreme importance, and vital information needs to be responsibly shared with people via the various available platforms (print, broadcast and social). While this is happening on one end, the academic community is seeing an influx of COVID-19-related information as scholarly communications (journal articles) of different types and most publishers have made these articles open access. Thus, evidence from experts to inform practice and influence policymaking is available at ease.

One such type of evidence that has become increasingly popular is regional experience reports. These are qualitative observations of successful stories, difficulties or lessons learnt by a particular country, community, institution or a group.<sup>1</sup> For example, experience reports from healthcare professionals focus on the way they have adapted to the pandemic while still providing routine care operations.<sup>2,3</sup> Today, because the disease has spread across the world, articles of this type, either as reviews, short communications or correspondences, are coming in from various regions and backgrounds.

On doing a PubMed search on May 13, 2020, using the search strategy 'COVID[All Fields] OR ("coronavirus"[MeSH Terms] OR "coronavirus"[All Fields]) AND experience[ti]', we found 262 articles, among which 105 were experience reports from various backgrounds. A majority of these reports (36.2%) were from Asia, with China being the largest contributor (Table 1).<sup>4–6</sup> Europe, predominantly Italy, and North America, predominantly the USA, had the second and third highest number of reports, respectively.<sup>7,8</sup>

These reports play a unique role in informing practice at various levels to effectively improvise, adapt and overcome the situation.<sup>9</sup> They highlight what key measures countries, communities, institutions or groups can take and what effect it will have on themselves or the population. Referring to such reports can save the need for devising or testing new strategies and prevents from adopting failed ones, while reported successful strategies can be followed wherever possible. However, considering the differences between backgrounds, it may be difficult for one to follow the same strategy

taken by another who has managed the pandemic successfully. In such cases, experience reports stand out as evidence that points out areas that need to be strengthened based on which help can be sought.

In addition to being reviewed and reliable sources of evidence on the measures taken during the pandemic, these experience reports could influence policymaking after the pandemic is over, be it in the country of origin or elsewhere. It may become necessary for governments and institutions to look back at themselves or at models and take every action possible to not let another pandemic rattle up the world as COVID-19 has done so far. For this reason, everyone's experience, irrespective of success or failure, needs to be told. More experiences from different parts of the world should be available for discussion and an opportunity for learning from each other should be created.

**Table 1**  
Number of experience reports from around the world.

Region	No. of reports	Overall percentage	Majority
Asia	38	36.2	China (57.9%)
Europe	33	31.4	Italy (81.8%)
North America	19	18.1	USA (94.7%)
Middle East	6	5.7	
Australia	1	0.95	
Multicentre	8	7.6	
Total	105		

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