

Covid and commercial research decline

September 14 2020, by David Bradley



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Inevitably, the rapid spread of an emergent and potentially lethal virus around the world has led to huge disruption of normal life. With talk of a new-normal in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we do not yet have any way of knowing what that might be. Work published in the *International Journal of Research, Innovation and Commercialisation* has

looked at the effect of the pandemic on the phenomenon of research innovation and commercialization.

Alberto Boretti of the College of Engineering at Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University in Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia, explains that the economic downturn we are experiencing as the pandemic circulates will have a detrimental effect on almost all research and development budgets. He suggests that the [pharmaceutical industry](#) may well receive special funds given its unique position in being an essential part of the fight against the current pandemic and the need for vigilance and preparedness for the next emergent pathogen. He also suggests that the [health sector](#) as well as surveillance and defense, communications, digital markets, and distance education may also see some relief from governments and funding bodies. Investment in almost every other area of R&D is expected to plummet.

With no vaccine expected to be available until at least 2021 and no targeted [antiviral drugs](#), it has been necessary to attempt to control the disease through political and legal controls, such as curfews, halting sports and entertainment, massively reduced air travel, social lockdowns, social distancing, and other measures. However, the so-called "second wave" is becoming apparent in the UK at the time of writing.

Many other nations have not achieved real control of the virus where strict lockdowns were entirely unfeasible for geographical and sociological reasons such as population density, a lack of protective infrastructure, and poor water and food security. Natural disasters, such as forest fires and civil unrest following episodes of police brutality, and the ongoing climate crisis have also been part of the undercurrent of 2020. What impact these have had on the ease with which the virus spreads is for future retrospective studies to determine.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has anticipated international

commerce to fall by 13% to 32% in 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic disturbs normal economic activity and life around the globe, Boretti says. Regarding these predictions proposed only a few weeks ago, it is likely the impact will be even worse than the worst-case scenario considered, he adds. The sharp decline in [gross domestic product](#) (GDP) will have a negative impact on R&D expenditure, as it always does. The opportunity to innovate and commercialize new products will decline enormously. "The future for research in 2020 does not look bright at all," Boretti concludes.

More information: Alberto Boretti. COVID-19 effect on the research-innovation-commercialisation phenomena, *International Journal of Research, Innovation and Commercialisation* (2020). [DOI: 10.1504/IJRIC.2020.109386](#)

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