COVID-END: Achievements, Priorities and Opportunities to Draw on this Work to Achieve Greater Value for Money When Commissioning or Funding COVID-19 Research

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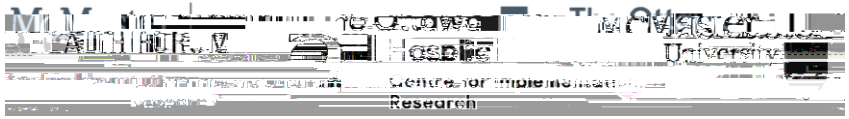

Background

Scientific evidence across all dimensions of the pandemic and response

Evidence syntheses given the explosion of scientific research

Living evidence syntheses given the pace of scientific advances

Evidence contextualization for specific contexts

Effective communication of high-quality, locally contextualized findings

Decision support with high-quality, locally contextualized findings

To avoid unnecessary duplication and enhance coordination (i.e., to avoid waste in all of the above) and to strengthen existing institutions and processes while doing it, which is where funders can play a key role

Background COVID-

COVID-END is a time-limited network that has come together in
-19) to collaboratively
advance the evidence (synthesis) ecosystem in a way that

- Makes the most of an explosion of interest in and demand for evidence synthesis (in part by reducing the noise-to-signal ratio)
- Makes the evidence (synthesis) ecosystem even more robust and resilient in future
- Strengthens existing institutions and processes

COVID-
primary research as well as in methodological research and infrastructure

COVID-END

Background COVID-

Three of the seven principles that underpin COVID-

Supporting (not competing with or replacing) well-positioned organizations that are working in close partnership with key target audiences and already responding to their evidence needs

Supporting with a common brand/identity, small agile secretariat, and simple working group structure a distributed network of organizations and individuals to play to their comparative

Seeking out quick wins for those supporting decision-makers and among those involved in preparing evidence syntheses, technology assessments and guidelines, and taking measured steps to longer-term solutions that can better support decision-makers

Background - COVID-

1) Scoping where support and coordination is most needed and what principles should underpin such support and coordination
2) Engaging those already supporting decision-makers to work in more coordinated and efficient ways
3) Digitizing as many aspects of the work as possible to facilitate coordination and capture efficiencies
4) Synthesizing the evidence that already exists in ways that are more coordinated and efficient and that balance quality and timeliness
5) Recommending evidence-based approaches in ways that are more coordinated and efficient and that balance quality and timeliness
6) Packaging evidence and guidelines in ways that meet the needs of citizens, providers, policymakers and researchers in different contexts and languages
7) Sustaining the efforts that strengthen institutions and processes so that we are even better prepared for future challenges

Seven Achievements (https://www.covid-end.org)

1) Regularly updated guide to key COVID-19 evidences sources, which can be used to quickly review high-yield, high-quality sources of evidence to respond to decision-
2) Living hub of COVID-19 knowledge hubs, which can be used to identify organizations that are already supporting decision-making with a specific268.55 Tm5eee20.275 Tf1 0 0 1 67.275 220.48 Tc nr000010729

Seven Achievements (

Priorities: 1) COVID-END Community Listserv

Reached out to 20+ networks to identify individuals with the following attributes to invite them to join the listserv (and community of practice)

Priorities: 2) Inventory (and Sharing)

Inventory

those who are part of the COVID-19 pandemic response, which will save time

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government (who can then focus on what the evidence means for their context)

- Evidence syntheses harvested bi-weekly from sources in COVID-END guide
- Filters applied for all parts of the COVID-END taxonomy of decisions (COVID-focused for all parts and often COVID-relevant too for health-system arrangements and economic & social responses)
- -, based on
  - Date of search (e.g., 2020-07-01)
  - Quality (AMSTAR) rating (e.g., 8/11)
  - Evidence profile available (e.g., yes, with hyperlink)
- Re-worded title with details to support relevance assessment (e.g., participants, exposure / intervention / phenomenon, and outcomes)

Priorities: 2) Inventory (and Sharing)

Inventory (continued)

- Additional decision-relevant information profiled

Rough Example of What the Inventory Will Look Like (Hiding and Not Hiding Columns)

Priorities: 3) Horizon Scanning

Global horizon-scanning of the long-term and emergent issues that need to be prioritized in efforts to synthesize the best available research evidence to support decision-making about COVID-19

- Diverse in their coverage across the parts of the taxonomy and the four key target audiences (citizens, providers, policymakers and researchers)
- Diversity in terms of WHO region and primary language

Main focus is to identify priorities for living reviews on recurring priorities (and full or rapid reviews on one-off priorities) as we transition from a sprint to a marathon

Priorities: 4) Living Systematic Reviews

In the short-term

Create a list of priority topics where living systematic reviews are needed (based upon our inventory and horizon-scanning activities)

In the medium-term

Cajole, encourage and nudge groups to collectively take responsibility for a full set of living reviews addressing all priority issues related to the pandemic and pandemic response

Implications for funding evidence synthesis and related activities to enhance value

Our assumptions (1)

The world will be best served by:

- A global stock of high quality, open-access living systematic reviews covering (80% of) key (healthcare, public health, health system, economic and social) issues faced by decision makers (to allow them to focus on contextualization of evidence within their setting
- Evidence synthesis capacity (and funding) to undertake priority syntheses where high quality living systematic reviews are not available
- Local evidence-support initiatives that can support decision makers to find and interpret best evidence
- Global evidence synthesis infrastructure (building wherever possible on existing evidence synthesis organisations) to facilitate efficient conduct and sharing of evidence syntheses

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Commissioning evidence syntheses (1)

Important to recognize the need for syntheses relevant to healthcare, public health, health system and, economic and social issues

Commissioning calls for evidence syntheses could recommend applicants review the COVID-END resources for researchers

If directed call, frame around evidence gaps that are locally/regionally important. Funders can use the COVID-

Commissioning evidence syntheses (2)

Consider commissioning for medium to long term

- current priorities are likely to remain relevant for the next 2-3 years
- given the explosion of research, evidence syntheses will rapidly become outdated
- consider building in funding for updates (preferably as living evidence syntheses) over a 2-3 year time scale

substantially less than resources required to do initial review (and

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Commissioning evidence-support initiatives (2)

COVID-END

Commissioning primary research

Point everyone to

- in the primary studies included in these syntheses
- COVID-END partner evidence maps (e.g., EPPI-Centre, Norwegian Institute of Public Health) and databases (e.g., L*VE, McMaster PLUS, TRIP, UNCOVER, VA) listed in the guide to COVID-19 evidences sources
- Horizon-scanning reports
- Other resources beyond COVID-END
  - COVID-19-COS for core outcomes

Implications for peer review

Ensure adequate evidence synthesis expertise in peer review panels

Encourage peer reviewers to use COVID-END resources when judging the merit and quality of the application (eg point peer reviewers to the COVID-END Inventory of best evidence syntheses and Resources for researchers)

Consider the overall coverage of commissioning decisions (eg to avoid commissioning multiple syntheses in the healthcare area but none in the economic and social sectors)

Summary

The explosion of primary COVID related research needs to appraised and summarized in evidence syntheses

Opportunity to move **FROM** **noise**-to-phase (rapid reviews, variable quality, quickly out-of-date, huge duplication of effort, pick-your-own) **TO** **signal**-to-phase (curated, high-quality, living evidence syntheses and evidence-support initiatives)

Research funders key to driving this change and enhancing value

COVID-END lessons may be relevant to producing more effective and efficient global evidence synthesis community beyond the current pandemic

Keep Up To Date and/or Share Your Insights

1) Website https://www.covid-end.org
2) Email c/o covid-end@mcmaster.ca
3) Twitter @covid_e_n_d
4) COVID-END Community listserv https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?SUBED1=COVIDEND&A=1