



COVID-END Partners Coordination Call

Notes from 21 May 2020

<https://zoom.us/j/6163788736>

1. INTRODUCTIONS

- a. Jeremy welcomed new collaborators (see attachment 2)
 - i. Edward Kayongo and Ismael Kawooya, Centre for Rapid Evidence Syntheses (ACRES), Makerere University (Uganda)
 - ii. Mosan Ocan, Africa Centre for Systematic Reviews and Knowledge Translation (Uganda)
 - iii. Nichole Taske, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (UK)
 - iv. Rajeev Aravindakshan, Pushpagiri Centre for Evidence Based Practice (India)
 - v. Two MPH students from Memorial University (Canada) who will be supporting COVID-END working group activities
 1. Lucy Shantel Nakibuuka
 2. Newman Dieyi

2. FOLLOW-UP ON ACTION ITEMS

- a. Jeremy pointed partners to the notes from the meeting held on 14 May (see attachment 3)
- b. Jeremy also pointed partners to the follow-up on action items, which the secretariat continues to return to in order to ensure that all action items have been or are being addressed (see attachment 4)

3. COVID-END COMMUNICATION

- a. COVID-END partners' site on MS Teams
 - i. Going forward we will share materials through MS Teams (not email as we've been doing to date)
 - ii. **ACTION: Any partners who have not been able to access the COVID-END team to notify Heather Bullock (bulloch@mcmaster.ca)**
- b. Draft COVID-END theory of change (see attachment 5)
 - i. Jeremy and Heather introduced a draft theory of change that has been developed by the secretariat and Sustaining working group
 - ii. Feedback included:
 1. General – Most partners responded positively; one partner suggested that what is missing is goals and actions; two partners suggested that success metrics and paths to achieving them need to be added; another partner suggested that COVID-END functions as a network-of-networks hubs and can strengthen connections among the many spokes in the evidence ecosystem, both through partners' regional and national sub-ecosystems and through the broader group of networks that the Engaging working group is about to start engaging (and this enabling function for

- connectivity across the evidence ecosystem should be more apparent in the logic model); another partner agreed with this and suggested that some redundancy is actually beneficial across these spokes
2. Problems – Expand the last problem statement to evidence and information full stop; add that many decision-makers are not seeking and using research evidence
 3. Mechanisms – Ensure these are clearly linked to vehicles and positioned in relationship to accompanying goals; consider making explicit somewhere tools and products that look at several uncertainties at the same time, not just one uncertainty; add coordination; consider making explicit fostering collaborations among groups in countries at different stages of the pandemic and pandemic response
 4. Outputs - Re-word outputs so they read as outputs
 5. Target groups - Move target groups so they don't interrupt an otherwise left-to-right flow; add a secondary target group of citizens; include groups supporting decision-makers in national and sub-national contexts, guideline developers, civil-society organizations, and the media as intermediaries; clarify who the decision-makers are and whether it's all researchers or the subset involved in evidence synthesis, etc.
 6. Short-term outcomes – Include indicators of these outcomes; emphasize the short-term outcomes of reducing duplication and maximizing use for decisions rather than improving the quality of synthesis, which can be divisive and too 'methodological'; include 'reduced duplication'; add an understanding of the different dynamics leading to redundancy and/or suboptimal collaboration/coordination
 7. Expected influences – Word the second part of the second influence more narrowly in relation to COVID-19 (and in a way that would make clear how we'd know if we were successful); mention preparedness for the next pandemic
- c. Jeremy introduced the idea of a journal commentary about the unique current context for supporting evidence-informed decision-making about COVID-19, and he shared the key messages that have emerged from discussions within the Packaging working groups
- i. Never needed scientific **evidence** more (across the full range of public-health measures, clinical management, health-system arrangements, and economic and social responses)
 - ii. Never needed **evidence syntheses** (and HTAs and guidelines) more (given the explosion of scientific research)
 - iii. Never needed **living evidence syntheses** (and HTAs and guidelines) more (given the pace of change in the available science)
 - iv. Never needed to sort high from low **quality** evidence syntheses (and HTAs and guidelines) more
 - v. Never needed evidence **contextualization** more (what does the research evidence mean for us in our context given the state of the pandemic and pandemic responses and local values and preferences)
 - vi. Never needed effective **communication** of high-quality and locally contextualized findings more (in hours not months, in plain language and in multiple languages, and in ways that combat mis-information)
 - vii. Never needed to **support decision-makers** more (with the most recent, best available, and locally contextualized research evidence that is understandable to them and directly applicable to the decisions they're grappling with)

- viii. Never needed to avoid unnecessary **duplication** and enhance **coordination** more (in all of the above) and to strengthen existing institutions and processes while doing it

Partners widely supported the idea of a BMJ commentary and offered the following feedback on the messages

- i. Consider profiling not just these messages (the what) but also the how
- ii. Consider adjusting or complementing point vi with something like ‘Never before needed so much, and so urgently, public understanding of science and evidence-informed personal decisions’
- iii. Consider complementing a health-focused BMJ commentary with a commentary in a non-health journal
- iv. *Addendum from the Packaging working group that followed the partners’ call*
 - 1. *Consider leading with the problems around noise, mis-information, errors from single and/or low-quality studies, etc. and the importance about solving the problems to save both lives and money*
 - 2. *Consider leading with point ii and then pivoting to the ‘so what,’ which is 4, 5 and 6 if we need to whittle it down to three key points*

Many partners also agreed that a researcher-targeted commentary should be complemented with commentaries that would reach a more diverse audience of decision-makers, providers, and citizens, which could include outlets such as

- i. Hybrid academic/journalism outlets like The Conversation
- ii. Newspapers like The Guardian in the UK and others in other parts of the world
- iii. News services like Reuters African Bureau
- iv. Websites like The Conversation Africa

Some partners also suggested reaching out to well-placed journalists for advice about how to pursue particular opportunities and/or to discuss potential venues

- i. Sharon Begley, former Science Editor at Newsweek, then at Reuters, and a speaker at the first EGAPPS meeting in 2012
- ii. *Addendum from the Packaging working group that followed the partners’ call*
 - a. *Ian Sample, science editor at The Guardian about a possible podcast series (which we can then promote and possibly translate into other languages)*
 - b. *Science Media Centre in each of the US, UK and New Zealand through which we can brief editors to provide context to their future requests to news correspondents*

UPDATES FROM WORKING GROUPS

- a. Review co-chairs meeting notes from May 18 (see attachment 6)
 - i) Jeremy introduced the notes from the meeting
- b. Updates from working groups that have met since our last call
 - i) Scoping
 - 1. Considered the theory of change model.
 - 2. Will provide strategic advice on scope and approach of COVID-END (for example will consider how best to support LMIC partners and stakeholders at the next meeting).
 - ii) Engaging
 - 1. Made progress in identifying groups and key contact people, as well as the initial messages that can then be adapted by the relevant contact people
 - 2. Will make a decision at the next meeting about whether to use a listserv (existing or new) or MS Teams as the vehicle for reaching these groups
 - iii) Digitizing

1. Made progress with the terms of reference and with the scope of the work ahead, but neither co-chair was present to provide a more fulsome de-brief
- iv) Synthesizing
 1. Refined the terms of reference for the working group
 2. Actively drafting a document to create content for the COVID-END portal ‘resources for researchers.’ This will address topics such as how to determine the need for a review, how to look for existing and ongoing syntheses, how to appraise these syntheses, and how to navigate choices among different types of syntheses. The aim is to share the document with other groups within the next week.

ACTION: Synthesizing working group to bring the draft document to the next partners meeting

- v) Recommending
 1. Finalized the terms of reference, discussed target groups, and confirmed the need for better engagement with the HTA community, however, neither co-chair was present to provide a more fulsome de-brief
- vi) Packaging
 1. Revised the terms of reference, drafted principles for evidence packaging, drafted a list of tools and resources to support evidence packaging, and drafted messages that could be used in a journal or other commentary (discussed above as part of agenda item 3c)
- vii) Sustaining
 1. Finalized the terms of reference, discussed differences between COVID-END and the evidence ecosystem, reviewed the draft logic model (and noted its focus on COVID-END and identified the need for a second one focused on the evidence ecosystem), and proposed beginning to collect data as part of a qualitative research study

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- a. Jeremy and John noted that Per-Olav Vandvik led a very informative webinar for GIN that profiled COVID-END and many COVID-END partners
 - i) Slides and recording available [here](#)
- b. Jeremy noted that we had two MPH students from Memorial University in Newfoundland who are completing their practicums with COVID-END who will be able to support the Working Groups.
- c. Jeremy noted that he and John had a call booked for later in the day with WHO and Cochrane
- d. Jeremy and John noted that Per-Olav Vandvik led a very informative webinar for GIN that profiled COVID-END and many COVID-END partners
- e. Jeremy and John also noted that they have drafted slides about COVID-END and will circulate the slides (which others can adapt and use as they see fit) as well as recordings of the webinars where the slides were used
 - i) English slides (attached) and [recording](#)
 - ii) French slides (attached) and [recording](#)
 - iii) Portuguese-subtitled recording to follow
- f. Jeremy explained (in response to a question) that new partners can signal their interest in joining a working group to the co-chairs of that working group

