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Editorial

## Covid-19: Physical Distancing Will Make Science Closer to Citizen Participation in Decision Making

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Nowadays, social distancing is mandatory in various countries worldwide. It is defined as a non-pharmaceutical intervention for preventing the spread of COVID-19, by maintaining a distance among people and reducing the frequency of contacts with each other. However, the correct definition, as reported somewhere, should be *physical distancing*. Populations are “socially” close, citizens are experimenting novel approaches of communication, and novel way to help.

Of course, in the era of social networks, everybody is enabled to get in touch, even with people that have been missing for a while. The velocity of how life goes, the necessity of getting results, the demonstration of one’s own value and the invention of brand-new strategies to overcome the generic “everyday” issues, covering all the fields such as family, job, friends, etc., are facing with a pandemic monster.

Unfortunately, this is the situation in the presence of a widespread virus and in the absence of a vaccine. Despite all the victims that have been counted, daily, the present emergency is teaching more than something to humankind, in all sectors. Companies are trialing a forced smart-working: perhaps it will be partially consolidated when we will be “physically closer” after pandemic? Schools and universities are facing the impossibilities to have students in classrooms. However, academy is exploiting e-learning approaches to make teaching possible. Even final dissertation has being achieved by online graduation sessions. Although the “in presence” teaching is and will continue to be the favorite way of exchange, by both students and professors, future students should not feel a prejudice towards the e-universities when choosing their growth path.

Again, people are being emotionally closer than before: plenty of charity actions, mainly directed to hospitals, are highlighting the tremendous social participation in opposing the emergency. Being part of the scientific community, the pandemic should convince how life without vaccines look likes. Hopefully, people far from science and scientific routes, should look at science from a diverse perspective, perhaps being suspicious from politicians’ slogan within scientific affairs, sometimes inaccurate and just (scientifically) erroneous: everyone, now, on her/his skin, knows that health is very fragile in such conditions.

Looking at the various newscasts, listening to the radio and reading the newspapers, the presence and the authority of scientists are fundamental. The politicians' decision to tackle this emergency are always taken following the "experts" recommendations. Science has been often far from society, far from decisions, for long times. Hopefully, life after pandemic will increase the sociality of science within life of lay audience.

Today, people are molecularly powerless against the Sars-Cov-2 spreading: the perception of how science represents the unique shield and the huge hope for vaccine development, represent common thoughts. It represents the past, present and future of humankind existence. Moreover, tremendous limitations are encountered in low-resource countries, where the uneven distribution of care centers, the scarcity of specialists and financial restrictions do not allow for early diagnosis and/or improved access to monitoring and treatment.

On the side of vaccine research and development, there is diagnostic. This is another very important character science is adopting. From the chemistry point of view, several approaches for creating easy to use and rapid diagnostic devices, at the point of care, have being developed and highlighted.

The most sold market examples of glucose strips diabetes and pregnancy tests represent a solid concept of decentralized monitoring, thus physical distant. The use of such technologies, that allows non-specialists to take clinical decisions, is something recurrent in the present period and source of inspiration. Point of care devices have been always associated to features like user-friendly, fast response, sensitive, specific and disposable. These keywords well fit with the current emergency. The pandemic is highlighting the role of researchers working in the field of analytical chemistry as extremely important. The necessity in developing portable devices, that avoid patients going to physicians or into hospitals, requiring very low amount of biological fluids, is the current challenge. It should be noted how Governments are providing "non-ordinary" funds for this hot-topic research.

However, to go beyond the state of the art, for providing advances in the diagnostic field, all the research branches cannot be distant: science progress needs to be exchanged in the vanguard of all the disciplines, merging chemistry, biology, biotechnology, physics, mathematics, engineering, telemedicine, etc.

When the pandemic will be beaten, the take home message to all the populations and institutions will make scientific efforts shining again. It should be clear to everyone that science is fundamental to live towards progress and wellness: hopefully, the calamity we are living today will be the breakpoint towards the challenges of tomorrow, like environmental pollution, climate change and sustainability vision.