

Chapter 6.1 - Health EDRM Research in the Context of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed inequalities and inadequate levels of preparedness in health systems across the world. Not only did it have drastic economic and social impacts, it is likely that the consequences of COVID-19 will increase poverty on a global scale. It also raised the importance of research to prevent and treat COVID-19, to deal with the consequences of the pandemic and its associated measures, and to evaluate other aspects of Health EDRM during a pandemic.

Hello and welcome to this installment in the audio series for the WHO Guidance on Research Methods for Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management. My name is Mike Clarke from Queen's University Belfast and Evidence Aid and I'm one of the authors of Chapter 6.1, *Health EDRM Research in the Context of COVID-19*, and, in this podcast, I'll explore those impacts and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic for Health EDRM research.

The spread of COVID-19 caused a rapid rush to conduct research about the virus, and there are many key principles throughout the WHO Guidance on Research Methods for Health EDRM that can help in planning, conducting and reporting new research on COVID-19. These include the need for research studies to be conducted on areas of uncertainty that need to be better understood, the importance of a clear research question and appropriate study design, and the careful consideration of relevant existing studies in order to avoid unnecessary duplication. These general topics are discussed in chapters 3.5 and 7.2 in the WHO Guidance, and, in chapter 6.1, we apply them to COVID-19, which is particularly important considering the vast number of studies that have been conducted on the virus since early 2020.

There have also been a very large number of systematic reviews, which are important for synthesizing existing research. However, the vast number of COVID-19 related systematic reviews present a challenge for decision-makers trying to access and use them. To combat this issue, various COVID-19 research repositories were launched, including the special collection of summaries of systematic reviews launched by Evidence Aid in March 2020. The aim is to improve access to the findings of systematic reviews for people working in disasters and you can read more about this type of evidence in chapter 3.7 in the WHO Guidance.

Lastly, COVID-19 has altered the scope of Health EDRM research in various ways. Many of the operational procedures and methods for Health EDRM research had to be altered to accommodate for COVID-19 safety measures. For instance, social distancing led to an increase in the use of online methods in research projects and changed the way qualitative and quantitative data are collected, with a switch from face-to-face to online methods. The experience with COVID-19 has also increased the need to communicate findings from Health EDRM research more quickly and widely.

To conclude, I thank you for listening to this brief introduction to Chapter 6.1. If you would like to learn more about the impacts of COVID-19 on Health EDRM research, please do read our

chapter. It, and the other chapters I have mentioned, can all be accessed for free on the WHO Knowledge Hub website. Thanks, goodbye for now.