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Article

Introduction to EconomiA COVID-19 issue

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Introduction to EconomiA COVID-19 Issue



The novel human coronavirus disease was first reported in Wuhan, China, in 2019 and began rapidly spreading across countries. In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, after the virus reached more than 100 nations in three months and infected over 110,000 people. Almost two years after, there are over 250 million COVID-19 cases and five million deaths from the disease.*

The emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus had profound impacts on all aspects of our lives. Masks and social distancing were heavily adopted as important measures for reducing the virus spread. Companies worldwide had to shut their offices and operations, causing a substantial contraction in economic activity. Many people started working from home, many became unemployed and essential workers were needed more than ever on the front lines to ensure the population's safety and health throughout the pandemic. Governments quickly developed and implemented social safety policies to help the most vulnerable, also contracting or worsening already heavy debt burdens. Schools fully closed or began virtual education, with effects that could be deeply felt in the long run. Digital connectivity became a necessity.

There was also an unprecedented response by the scientific community, and the pace of science has accelerated tremendously. New technologies and vaccines were developed in record time, and countries started vaccinations campaigns by the end of 2020 and throughout 2021 to contain the virus spread. More than 8.5 billion vaccine doses have been administered worldwide, and nearly 50% of people were fully vaccinated against COVID-19.† At the same time, vaccination resistance and variants are surfacing as new challenges. On the business side, many companies had to overcome slow procedures, complex bureaucracies, and rigid hierarchies and increase the use of digital technology to adapt. And this led to innovations that could be maintained after the crisis.

However, most disturbingly, these impacts and responses, whether positive or negative, were not equally distributed and implemented, with the poor and vulnerable being harmed the most. Mortality tends to be concentrated in the most deprived areas, with lower employment rates, more overcrowded and vulnerable housing, lower internet access, and higher poverty rates. There was a rise in food insecurity, which also led to higher rates of violence and conflicts in frail settings. Women tended to be employed in sectors most affected by the pandemic and lockdowns. And these are just some of the patterns being uncovered.

As of the publication of this special issue, the pandemic is still with us and continues to test the resilience of health systems and challenge the global and local economies, requiring quick and effective government responses. Economists and social scientists are working hard on understanding the pandemic impacts and how to mitigate its pervasive consequences and inequalities. This special EconomiA issue intends to contribute to the ongoing broad economic research on Covid-19. We hope that this issue will help provide a better understanding of the current crisis and guide policymakers and countries to deal better with both its immediate and longer-run effects.

However, as we all know, the COVID-19 research evolves fast and has many challenges. This edition was built to provide important and timely knowledge, especially in a developing country setting, but also recognizes the fast-evolving and complex nature of this literature and its methods. This special issue should be seen as an important brick among many, helping advance

* Dong E, Du H, Gardner L. *An interactive web-based dashboard to track COVID-19 in real time*. *Lancet Inf Dis*. 20(5):533-534. Accessed on December 21st, 2021.

† Hannah Ritchie, Edouard Mathieu, Lucas Rodés-Guirao, Cameron Appel, Charlie Giattino, Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, Joe Hasell, Bobbie Macdonald, Diana Beltekian and Max Roser (2020) - "Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19)". *Published online at OurWorldInData.org*. Retrieved from: '<https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus>'. Accessed on December 21st, 2021.

the new and fast-growing COVID-19 literature, supporting further and deeper work, and being open to constructive criticism. Much remains to be learned, improved, and developed.

Among 162 submissions, 10 peer-reviewed articles were selected to be part of this edition covering multiple aspects of the pandemic. The reader will find studies implementing SIR, DSGE, and input-output models to understand how different policies can impact the dynamics of the epidemic; showing the different effects in property and violent crime following a decline in mobility; analyzing socioeconomic and gender disparities resulting from the pandemic; evaluating how negativistic rhetoric can weaken measures of social distancing and increase new cases and deaths from the coronavirus; seeking to understand the gap between potential and observed remote work in Brazil; and understanding policies such as the Paycheck Protection Program in the United States.

We would like to praise all the authors responsible for the important research that made this edition unique and valuable. Also, we want to highlight and deeply thank the important contribution of our associated editors Thomas Conti, Edson Domingues, Silvia Matos, and Simone Wajnman, without which this work would not have been possible. Finally, we are also very grateful for all the support and confidence from Joaquim Andrade, José Angelo Divino and Mauro Rodrigues, which invited and helped us put this edition together.

We are happy to publish this special issue and hope you find value in its results as much as we did.

Sincerely,

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