Case study

Innovative concepts to communicate science

DURING COVID-19

Contributor
Evidence Aid

Country of implementation
Global

Start date of the initiative
February 2020

Track
Science communication by researchers

Target audience
Decision-makers
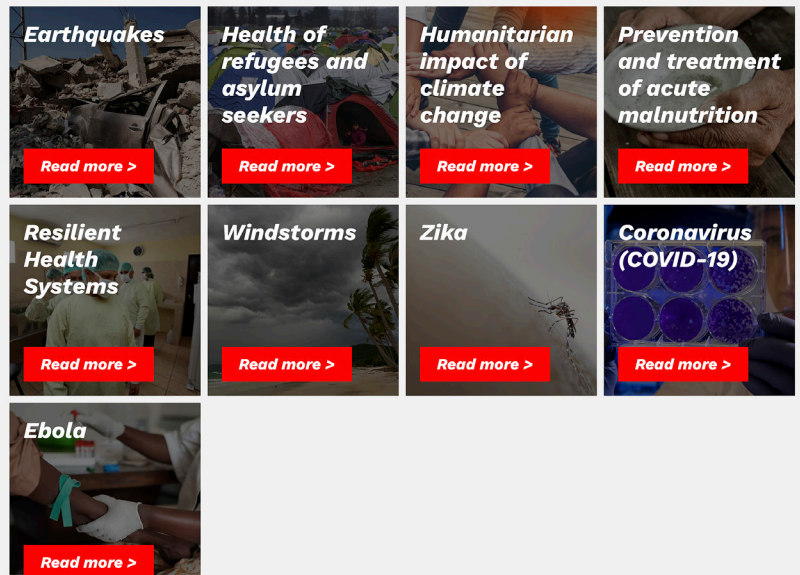
Website
https://evidenceaid.org/

Evidence collections

In our evidence collections we bring together a curated selection of some of our most topical and most used resources. To see a full list of all resources, go to <u>search all resources</u>.

Four additional collections have been created in collaboration with Cochrane. <u>View the Cochrane – Evidence Aid collections</u>.

We have also collated a list of external <u>online collections of research for the humanitarian sector</u>.

Earthquakes Read more >	**Health of refugees and asylum seekers** Read more >	**Humanitarian impact of climate change** Read more >	**Prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition** Read more >
Resilient Health Systems Read more >	**Windstorms** Read more >	**Zika** Read more >	**Coronavirus (COVID-19)** Read more >
Ebola Read more >			

Evidence Aid: COVID-19 evidence summaries collection

Summary of the initiative

This online platform run by Evidence Aid provides plain language summaries of systematic reviews on research and evidence-based interventions for prevention and treatment of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). It complements Evidence Aid's regular activities aimed at providing decision-makers with evidence on how to prepare for and respond to emergencies.

The collection of summaries of high-quality systematic reviews provides policy analysts and decision-makers in the health sector with easy access to the latest evidence on what works and what might not work in the global response to COVID-19.

The initiative operates on five channels: a project website,[i] Facebook,[ii] Instagram,[iii] LinkedIn,[iv] and Twitter[v]. The team publishes its summaries on the project website, with an emphasis on adding reviews that are up-to-date and likely to be most relevant to decision-makers. The reach is amplified by sharing the content across the other outlets. The summaries are available in eight languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

An international team of volunteers who have a wide variety of backgrounds, and include medical students, information specialists, health care practitioners and academic researchers, including professors in various disciplines engage in the distillation of systematic reviews into plain language summaries. To date, they have reviewed more than 900 systematic reviews from which over 580 summaries have been produced.

Image above: screenshot of the Evidence Aid homepage. Copyright and credit: Evidence Aid.

World Health Organization | EPI·WIN

Summary of the analysis

Innovation factors

The COVID-19 pandemic has produced an immense amount of research investigating the transmission modes, consequences, preventive measures and risks of infection. Systematic reviews are the gold standard for evidence synthesis, systematically summarizing and assessing the body of research for a pre-defined research question. However, they often use subject-specific terminology and are written in a very technical manner. This makes their content and conclusions less accessible for people with different professional backgrounds or lay readers. In addition, the reviews, like the studies they include, are often scattered across multiple databases, journals and websites requiring advanced scientific search skills, sometimes expensive database subscriptions and considerable time to search through all the evidence.

Evidence Aid produces short summaries of about half a page for the latest systematic reviews on COVID-19. The summaries are written in plain language and follow a structured format focusing on:

- what was being researched;
- what was found as a result of the review;
- what implications the results have; and
- any other considerations taken during the search such as location of the original studies, etc.

The project website includes summaries of systematic reviews in areas such as diagnosis, prognosis and epidemiology of COVID-19 as well as public health interventions that are relevant to the pandemic response and recovery. While most evidence synthesis work has focused on the rapidly evolving research on COVID-19, the Evidence Aid team also searches for reviews of relevant pre-pandemic research which can be used to make decisions about COVID-19 and its effects.

This allows decision-makers and other interested audiences to gain a rapid overview of the content and conclusions of the latest, best available evidence on COVID-19-related topics. During a time in which evidence-informed decisions are crucial but the amount of emerging evidence is overwhelming, the Evidence Aid platform makes a significant contribution to science translation.

The summaries are innovative in drawing on feedback from decision-makers in different levels of government, nongovernmental, and humanitarian organizations.

Accuracy of scientific information

As sources, the team uses:

- systemic reviews of emerging research;
- pre-pandemic reviews of relevant interventions, such as those used to prevent and treat other coronaviruses;
- reviews on other health conditions that might be impacted by the consequences of COVID-19, such as those relating to the use of telehealth; and
- reviews that may be important for the recovery period after the pandemic, including those on the mental health impact of the pandemic measures.

These are found from regular searches of the health care literature, using databases such as PubMed.

The summaries are freely accessible online with links to the original systematic reviews for transparency and to facilitate the user's information search.
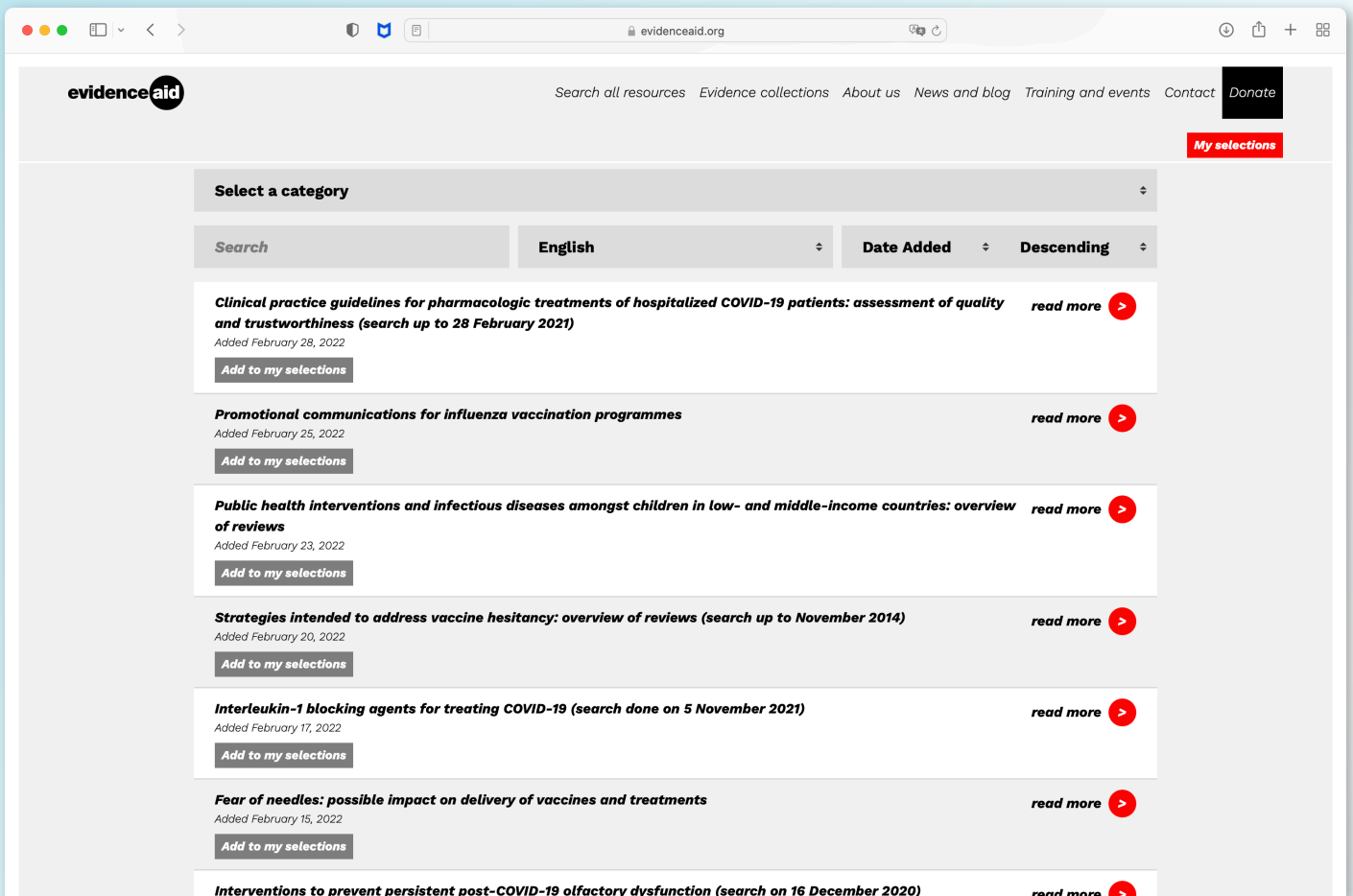
A screenshot of the Evidence Aid homepage. Copyright and credit: Evidence Aid.

Impact on knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of the target audience

Impact analytics include:

- 500 000 unique visitors to the Evidence Aid website worldwide between March 2020 and December 2021, a massive increase from the less than 40 000 who accessed the website in 2019;
- 10 000 followers on the project's Twitter account;
- 860 members on the Facebook group;
- 820 followers on Facebook page;
- 613 followers on LinkedIn; and
- 145 followers on Instagram.

A recent study by researchers at McMaster University in Canada interviewed more than 30 Evidence Aid users working in parts of the world particularly affected by humanitarian crises. The findings showed that the respondents found the resources to be useful, accessible and credible.

As a follow-up, the project team conducted a mixed-methods study examining the views and experiences of people making decisions about the response to COVID-19 of using the COVID-19 evidence summaries to inform their decision-making. Preliminary findings indicate that they found the collection relevant, easy-to-understand, specific and concise. The team expects to publish the results from the study and use them for quality improvement.

Gender equality, equity and human rights considerations

The project promotes information-equity and human rights by providing access to reliable and accurate health information in plain language for free. This enables users of any literacy level to make evidence-informed decisions during the pandemic.

The summaries are available in multiple languages to promote multilingualism.
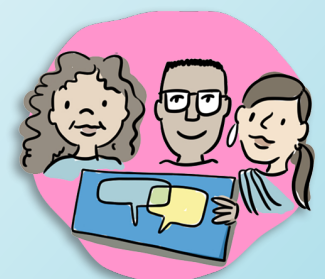
Challenges, solutions, and limitations

The project relies on volunteers who struggle to keep up with the large number of reviews published every week. The team is soliciting funds to sustain the project by recruiting full-time staff and scaling up the work.
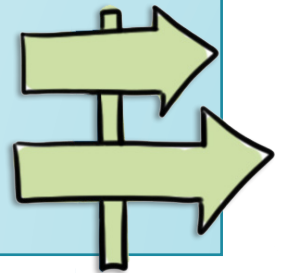
The team believes that the project will have more impact with a suitable promotion strategy as there is suboptimal awareness of its work among decision-makers on a global scale. To overcome this, the team is publishing monthly newsletters, engaging with a wider audience through social media, and recruiting new volunteers and researchers from around the world.

Looking forward

The project team continues to produce evidence summaries and improve the format to respond to the feedback collected. Additionally, team members are collaborating with agencies such as the Pan American Health Organization and the UK Health Security Agency (formerly, Public Health England) to increase outreach and consolidate efforts to support evidence-informed decision-making.

Evidence Aid is also working with the World Health Organization to build a knowledge hub for health emergency and disaster risk management research. This work aims to build a strong evidence base for health and natural disasters.

The team recognizes that currently most resources are focused on COVID-19 research which has deprived other areas of health and social care which now needs to recover, become more resilient and grow.

References

i. Evidence Aid. Coronavirus (*https://evidenceaid.org/evidence/coronavirus-covid-19/?p=101888&language=en*).
ii. Evidence Aid Facebook page (*https://www.facebook.com/EvidenceAid/*).
iii. Evidence Aid Instagram account (*https://www.instagram.com/evidenceaid/*).
iv. Evidence Aid LinkedIn page (*https://www.linkedin.com/company/evidence-aid/*).
v. Evidence Aid on Twitter (*https://twitter.com/EvidenceAid?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor*).