Coping with Covid-19: reflecting on the process of modifying methods midway

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Background

- Modifying methods midway through a PhD, once project plans have been painstakingly prepared, revised, and scrutinised is not ideal.
- Following the realisation that Covid-19 was unlikely to be a passing pandemic, it was necessary to decide: Are the proposed methods still feasible considering the change in context? If not, what are the alternatives and how should the research methods be adapted?
- This poster summarises the process taken to address these crucial questions.
- In the post-Covid-19 research milieu, stakeholder engagement and collaboration and are likely to become increasingly pivotal.
- Bournemouth University’s Public Involvement in Education and Research (PIER partnership) was a vital role-player in facilitating patient and public involvement (PPI) during the re-design phase.

Approach

- PPI represents an invaluable tool for (re-)planning and (re-)designing healthcare research by informing essential research decisions.1
- Targeted consultation (i.e., involving real-world research users with lived experience)1 was utilised to reformulate the research design, and inform its implementation which is presented in the figure below.

(1) Reconsider
- Re-examine the literature to identify emerging knowledge gaps;
- Identify novel and validated methods suitable for the Covid-19 context 2 (e.g., grey literature and webinars);
- Re-formulate research question(s).

(2) Engage
- Discuss alternatives with supervisors;
- Seek peer-support from postgraduates facing similar challenges;
- Gain multiple perspectives to

(3) Plan PPI
- Identify real-world experts by experience to discuss ideas and help pinpoint probable barriers.
- Determine the level of involvement and stage of research cycle where expert involvement is most suited.

(4) Consult Experts
- Describe the research question(s) and choice of methods;
- Request specific input on aspects of the research design and planning;
- Explore their lived experiences in relation to the proposed study.

(5) Further Considerations
- Impact on project timeline and availability of resources;
- Recognition for expert involvement;

Contribution

- Covid-19 remains an ongoing challenge to student researchers.
- This poster provides a pragmatic guide explaining the approach used to modify the initial research design.
- It presents key considerations and potential ideas which may be useful to healthcare research students.

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References

2 Lupton, D., 2020. Doing fieldwork in a pandemic (crowd-sourced document). Available at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cGGAABB2h2gbQUG9q1atE8Tmg988P0NMyVuiHZCI8/edit?pli s=5e88ae0a#