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Commentary

“Coronary Blindness: Desensitization after excessive exposure to coronavirus-related information“

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The coronavirus epidemic has not only affected the health, political and social systems across the globe but also drastically impacted journals and research groups in a negative way. Most journals have favored articles written about coronavirus which provide critical and effective solutions against the ongoing pandemic. Therefore, many researchers who are not experts in virology and epidemiology have written many articles with the promise of publication in a short time, contributing to literature and society.

The response of journals to COVID-19 has resulted in a large volume of research moving through the publication process very quickly. Although this emergency allows for accelerated publishing, standards are necessary to ensure the integrity of studies [1]. Considering the easier opportunities to publish papers, many authors have shifted their research topics, connecting them to the epidemic situation. However, articles written with such a mindset may lead readers to be less interested in those topics and there are risks that essential articles particularly targeting the disease by career experts will be superseded by these more irrelevant articles. Though pertinent to the epidemic situation, this may desensitize people to similar epidemic-related content.

This phenomenon is similarly observed as banner blindness or advertisement blindness in behavioral psychology. “Banner blindness” occurs when users want to find relevant information, and highlighted information by the designer is not likely the relevant information [2]. In the context of our manuscript, after being exposed to an excessive number of relevant epidemic studies, webpage visitors or researchers

will decline to read related articles or news because they may consciously or subconsciously believe that these articles were not written sincerely. We can call this situation “coronavirus blindness”.

Besides, similar pressures may lead people with certain psychological problems (e.g. paranoia) to perceive this pandemic situation as a conspiracy. They can deny the seriousness of the epidemic situation to avoid anxiety due to the excessive exposure to content associated with the pandemic.

In addition, prioritizing epidemic-related issues over such a long period (over two years) may even reduce the likelihood of useful papers being accepted by journals, since most published papers cannot help provide the necessary treatment for the disease.

Similarly, there is a risk of focusing on only one research topic [3]. On the other hand, it is unclear how this will affect the researchers who are doing basic medical and epidemiological coronavirus research. Therefore, further studies are needed to investigate how researchers are impacted by excessive exposure to Coronavirus-related information’.

In conclusion, it is essential to remember that publication ethics are central to scientific ethics and journals need to scrutinize the quality of each submission based on their unique scientific contribution [4]. Furthermore, journals should carefully scrutinize articles to prevent coronavirus blindness.

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