

Science4Pandemics: A European Gamification Project to Better Prepare Young People for Future Pandemics

The digital platform will educate young people and provide real-world data for collaborative research on pandemics.

Barcelona, 27 January 2022. Despite the many advances in the **global fight against infectious diseases** and the millions of lives saved by vaccines and other preventive and therapeutic methods, infections remain a major threat to humanity. **COVID-19** has reminded us of the devastating effects that pandemics can have globally. Beyond the clear prominence of SARS-CoV-2, however, **malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS** and **multidrug-resistant bacteria** remain major causes of morbidity and mortality.

Last week saw the launch of **Science4Pandemics (S4P)**, a new European project that will develop a **digital platform to educate the public** on the **prevention and management of pandemics**. Targeting the **adolescent population** in particular, the new project will use **gamification** and **artificial intelligence (AI)** as its main tools for enhancing the public's understanding of this field. Moreover, individual and community-level data generated and interpreted via the digital platform will help to improve research, preparedness and management of future pandemics. This three-year project supported by [EIT Health](#) will be led by the [Sant Joan de Déu Research Institute \(IRSJD\)](#), in collaboration with the [Barcelona Institute for Global Health \(ISGlobal\)](#).

“Gamification is a very attractive approach for educating younger generations in the field of infectious diseases and pandemics,” commented **Begonya Nafria**, coordinator of the Patient Involvement in Research Area at the IRSJD and principal investigator on the project. “Currently, there is a clear disconnect between, on the one hand, the vast amount of information available on pandemics generally and COVID-19 in particular and, on the other, the acceptance and understanding of this information. We need to **improve people's knowledge about infectious diseases** in order to adequately monitor the prevention and management of potential future pandemics.”

Among other aspects, the educational project will cover the infectious disease cycle, basic biology and clinical features of outbreak-prone infections. It will also raise awareness about pandemic prevention and management measures to prevent the health system from becoming overstretched and increase confidence in the safety and efficacy of vaccines.

“Faced with the avalanche of information available on the current pandemic, young people find it **difficult to distinguish between scientifically sound and unsubstantiated information**, which makes it difficult for them to get actively involved and follow prevention recommendations,” commented **Quique Bassat**, ICREA researcher at ISGlobal and co-researcher on the project. “Through a collaborative game, Science4Pandemics will offer an educational platform specifically tailored to this age group, thereby facilitating the participation of younger generations.”

Collaborative Pandemic Research

Science4Pandemics is a new way of empowering society through an **educational initiative** that will also provide real-world data for **collaborative research on pandemics**. Digital gamification helps citizens to learn efficiently, while at the same time enabling them to become active providers of data on a voluntary basis. The digital platform will use AI algorithms to collect data that will allow researchers to learn from ordinary citizens (e.g. about symptomatology, horizontal and vertical disease spread, strains and behaviours).

Multidisciplinary Consortium

Science4Pandemics (S4P) is a multidisciplinary consortium coordinated by the IRSJD/Sant Joan de Déu Research Foundation that comprises various institutions from Spain, Portugal and Italy, including the **Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal)**, the **University of Barcelona (UB)**, the **University of Coimbra (UC)**, the **Borja Institute of Bioethics (IBB)**, the **Pedro Nunes Institute**, the paediatric research network **Penta**, the company **Exheus** and the pharmaceutical manufacturers **Sanofi** and **GSK**. In addition, this Europe-wide project will enjoy the active collaboration of **UNICEF** and the **”la Caixa” Foundation** on educational and outreach activities.

About EIT Health

EIT Health is a network of best-in-class health innovators backed by the EU. We collaborate across borders to deliver new solutions that can enable European citizens to live longer, healthier lives. As Europeans tackle the challenge of increasing chronic diseases and multi- morbidity and seek to realise the opportunities that technology offers to move beyond conventional approaches to treatment, prevention and healthy lifestyles, we need thought leaders, innovators and efficient ways to bring innovative healthcare solutions to market. EIT Health addresses these needs. We connect all relevant healthcare players across European borders – making sure to include all sides of the “knowledge triangle”, so that innovation can happen at the intersection of research, education and business for the benefit of citizens. For more information visit: www.eithealth.eu.

About ISGlobal

The Barcelona Institute for Global Health, ISGlobal, is the fruit of an innovative alliance between the ”la Caixa” Foundation and academic and government institutions to contribute to the efforts undertaken by the international community to address the challenges in global health. ISGlobal is a consolidated hub of excellence in research that has grown out of work first started in the world of health care by the Hospital Clínic and the Parc de Salut MAR and in the academic sphere by the University of Barcelona and Pompeu Fabra University. Its working model is based on the generation of scientific knowledge through Research Programmes and Groups, and its translation through the areas of Training and Analysis and Global Development. ISGlobal has been named a Severo Ochoa Centre of Excellence and is a member of the CERCA system of the Generalitat de Catalunya.

ISGlobal Press Office

Beatriz Fiestas

beatriz.fiestas@isglobal.org

+34 669 877 850