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**Title**

*Public health and primary health care collaboration in eight high-income countries during the COVID-19 pandemic*

**Priority 1 (Research Category)**

COVID-19

**Presenters**

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**Abstract**

CONTEXT: The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of strong public health (PH) and primary health care (PHC) systems to respond nimbly and effectively during times of crisis. Both play a crucial role in triage and prevention, management, vaccination, and communication. PH and PHC systems, however, often act in parallel streams, but rarely together. OBJECTIVE: This study aims to describe PH and PHC collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic in eight high-income countries. METHODS: In-depth case study reports were generated for each country or jurisdiction. Reports searched both peer-review publications and grey literature on five dimensions identified by the World Health Organization regarding COVID-19 management. Reports included country-specific health system descriptions, PH and PHC actions during the pandemic, and an evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. Expert validation was conducted by internal country stakeholders prior to cross-jurisdiction analyses. ANALYSIS: Thematic content analysis was conducted on all reports to develop a coding framework. Codes were identified that were relevant to the research questions. The study team discussed and reconciled discrepancies in themes until consensus was reached. RESULTS: Data was collected from eight high-income countries (Belgium, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, and Spain) from March 2020 to July 2021. Four key themes were identified along with respective strengths/weaknesses. 1) Health information systems: this played a critical role for disease containment and management when designed for efficient data management and cross-sectoral data-sharing. 2) Communication: In countries where PHC was engaged early on, PH messages were amplified; in other countries, a lack of cohesion in communication resulted in poor or delayed community-level responses. 3) Human resource capacity: Health human resources were overwhelmed, with many staff redeployed and undertrained. 4) Professional training: Health professionals who received dual training in PH and PHC acted as strong

community champions and may be a bridge for future pandemics. CONCLUSION: Health system needs shifted dramatically throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Our findings highlight four key lessons regarding PH and PHC collaboration from eight high-income countries. Future pandemic preparedness should focus on health information systems and data management, PH communication, health human resources, and education and training.