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The pandemic and networking - *what did we learn and what can we keep?*

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- A personal view (with some literature search)
- Networking was advanced in science well before the pandemic, thus we cannot say that we "discovered" something during the pandemic.
- However it would be unfair to state that we learned nothing about networking due to the pandemic, if anything because we used it much more extensively for:
 - teaching,*
 - science diffusion,*
 - interpersonal meetings*
 - conferences.*

Impact of networking on teaching

- Transferring in person teaching lecture to the network in *synchronous* or *asynchronous* modes. *This works and is appreciated by students.*
- *Social networks do not work for teaching* (blogs, chatrooms, etc.): participation is scarce.
- *Written exams are possible* but the questions should be conceived in a way that prevents an easy search for answers on the web.
- *Reference: <https://www.asbmb.org/education/online-teaching>*

Three considerations on online teaching /learning

- The *group of students plays an important role* in learning, because it stimulates questions and discussions. This role can be reproduced in online teaching but this is not easy.
- Online or mixed teaching/learning has *important economical advantages for the students* and may help to increase the enrollment to university courses.
- *Practical skills are difficult to properly teach/learn online.*

Some studies on online learning/teaching:

1. Brockfeld T et al. *Video versus live lecture courses: a comparative evaluation of lecture types and results*. Medical Education Online Volume 23, 2018. *Results: “There is hardly any difference regarding effectiveness”.*
2. Pei L and Wu H. *Does online learning work better than offline learning in undergraduate medical education? A systematic review and meta-analysis* Medical Education Online Volume 24, 2019. *Results: “none of the included studies concluded that online learning was less effective than offline [traditional] methods”.*

Impact of networking on scientific knowledge diffusion

- When used for scientific knowledge diffusion to the general public, *the network is a double edged sword*: it can reach a wide audience, especially if one has access to web-based newspapers or other widely accessed sites, but one is exposed to anti-science criticism (e.g. anti-vaxes).
- *Truth, sound scientific data, good reasoning, etc. are not sufficient.*
- However, *the web is the medium for science diffusion*, and we cannot neglect it.

Impact of networking on interpersonal meetings

- *Faute de mieux*, we used the web, and *it more or less worked*, but is clearly inferior to direct interpersonal contact.
- However, the *web is inexpensive*, and in some cases this is so substantial an advantage to overcome other considerations

Impact of networking on conferences

- *Outstanding success* (at least in some cases) ! Our experience at the Medical Academy of Rome. We switched from conferences in presence with an average attendance of 50 to conferences via web with an average attendance of 400-500! *We decided to maintain a mixed mode of conferencing*
- *Problem*: how to diffuse your program to the potentially interested audience (in presence it is limited to academy members who receive the program; via web we collect a much larger audience from the whole country).
- *Congresses are probably a different matter*, as the direct interpersonal contact plays a more significant role.



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