

CAYS report of activities on Webinar series

In a bid to reach out to the national, continental and global scientific community, the Cameroon Academy of Young Scientists (CAYS), planned a series of Webinars on topical issues that cut across science and current challenges plaguing scientists and communities. This broad and interrelated thematic scopes were discussed by national and international speakers as follow:

1- CAYS Webinar Series 12:1 “Visibility of a researcher, Science Writing and Publishing and Communicating research findings” on August 28th, 2020

The presentations and discussions centered on the need to target credible (possibly impact factor) journals, dealing with journal article rejection, and the steps to identify relevant journals for scientific articles. Regarding visibility, it was strongly recommended that scholars should enhance visibility by disseminating their findings to different networks, join different scientific platforms (e.g. Google scholar, Academia.edu, Researchgate) and groups (e.g. CAYS, GYA, AAS) to enhance their visibility, and that of their universities/institutes. In communicating research findings, it was noted, an effective two-way communication is required. This, it was noted, could only be achieved if the science communicator has a clear understanding of his/her audience, and embrace plain language during the communication process. To strike a balance between print journal and e-journals, participants suggested that CAYs should take this up and prepare a position statement/policy brief, to share with the authorities of higher education in Cameroon. This may give a new impetus to the higher education research strategy in the face of a growing competitive global scientific landscape.

2- CAYS Webinar Series 12:2 on “COVID-19 and other infectious diseases” on September 11th, 2020

This public health thematic is of high concern in our present time since the breakout of COVID-19 in December 2019. Co-morbidity COVID-19 and other infectious diseases (IDs), diagnosis and therapeutic management of COVID-19 infection in co-morbidity with other IDs in the African context, and impact of COVID-19 on infectious diseases control. Co-infection COVID-19 and other IDs such as HIV, Hepatitis (B, C), Malaria, Tuberculosis, Pneumonia, Aspergillosis, Candidiasis, and neglected diseases co-weaken the immune system of patients. Management measures (face masks, hand washing, social distance, sensitization campaigns, etc.) so far used against Covid-19 infection have positively helped in the prevention or reduced the incidence of other IDs. However, excessive medical and financial attention/focus on COVID-19 has been detrimental to drug/ medical service delivery and immunization programs of other IDs. COVID-19 is like a new born ‘infectious baby’ that must be added to our IDs basket. Like in the case of our common cold/ catarrh, our best option in facing COVID-19 remains learning how to live with, with minimal morbidity impact on human health. This is even advocated by the WHO Director-General. Preventive measures of COVID-19 are worldwide homologated, but the therapeutic methods varied and remain to some extent controversial. The possible and positive contribution of our medicinal plants or their formulated products (claim by the populations and highly encouraged by government authorities) could play significant role in the prevention and/or treatment of COVID-19 infection, though more work is still to be carried in order to better define

their action and comply with appropriate therapeutic protocols. On the research perspectives, more data on COVID-19 cases and therapies used in the presence or not of the other IDs would help having more conclusive information on the African context of the disease.

3- CAYS Webinar Series 12:2 on “The effect of COVID-19 on research output in Africa” on September 26th, 2020.

The aim was to assess research output in Africa before and during the COVID-19 era. In addition, the meeting contributed to provide a way forward to scientific productivity amidst the COVID-19 pandemic so that researchers are not redundant. The theme of the day was addressed by national and international speakers under the following sub-themes: Research and research output in Africa (pre COVID-19). The impact of COVID-19 on research output: Possible solutions to be able to continue with research and Post COVID-19 and research in Africa. During the talks, the African continent was situated in the world with respect to disease burden, population, and research visibility through publications. The trend in research output over the years and the pattern of scientific collaboration was unraveled. The benefit of African-led capacity building was highlighted with the goal of encouraging more efficiency in research that can be commensurate to the African population. Continuing research during this period was emphasized with various adaptations proposed. Some highlighted strategies were to collaborate more and build stronger teams. The audience were encouraged to join associations and conferences online. The importance of joining research networking platforms such as ResearchGate.net and the need to add COVID-19 to individual research work was underscored. On the post COVID-19 perspective, a paradigm shift in research because of the pandemic has been observed and researchers must embrace this. To this regard, researchers must develop a sense of readiness for change through autonomous and intrinsic motivation as well as self-regulated learning and research skills. It is obvious that after this unprecedented era, in addition to the traditional research method, e-learning/digital learning and remote research will continue, thus a redesigning of research methodologies.

