

Global academies call for health data sharing framework

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Standardised data needs to be “accessible to all”

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Science academies around the world have called for a health data sharing framework to ensure equitable access to data during global health emergencies.

The InterAcademy Partnership (IAP), a network of hundreds of science academies, released the call on 28 February. It states that a lack of infrastructure, skills and incentives prevent health data from being shared effectively.

It recommends that the World Health Organization set up a “global health data governance commission” this year to guide the collaboration, harmonisation, storage, sharing and standardisation of data during health emergencies.

The IAP also calls for a treaty to act as a legal instrument for sharing data in case of a pandemic or emergency, capacity building in data science in poorer countries, an overhaul of regulations for sharing genetic sequence data, and ethical guidelines for sharing health research data.

“Pandemics are not defined by national borders – an effective global response is dependent on each and every country sharing health data in a standardised manner for it to be readily available and accessible to all,” said Salim Abdool Karim, the South African researcher who chaired the group that drew up the recommendations.

Abdool Karim is the head of the Centre for the Aids Programme of Research in South Africa and former chair of its health ministry’s Covid-19 advisory committee.

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