

# A voice for science in a health crisis

**Review of the Academy of Medical  
Sciences through the pandemic**

“I took on the role of President of the Academy during the most significant health crisis of the century. Without doubt the pandemic has been a defining moment for us.

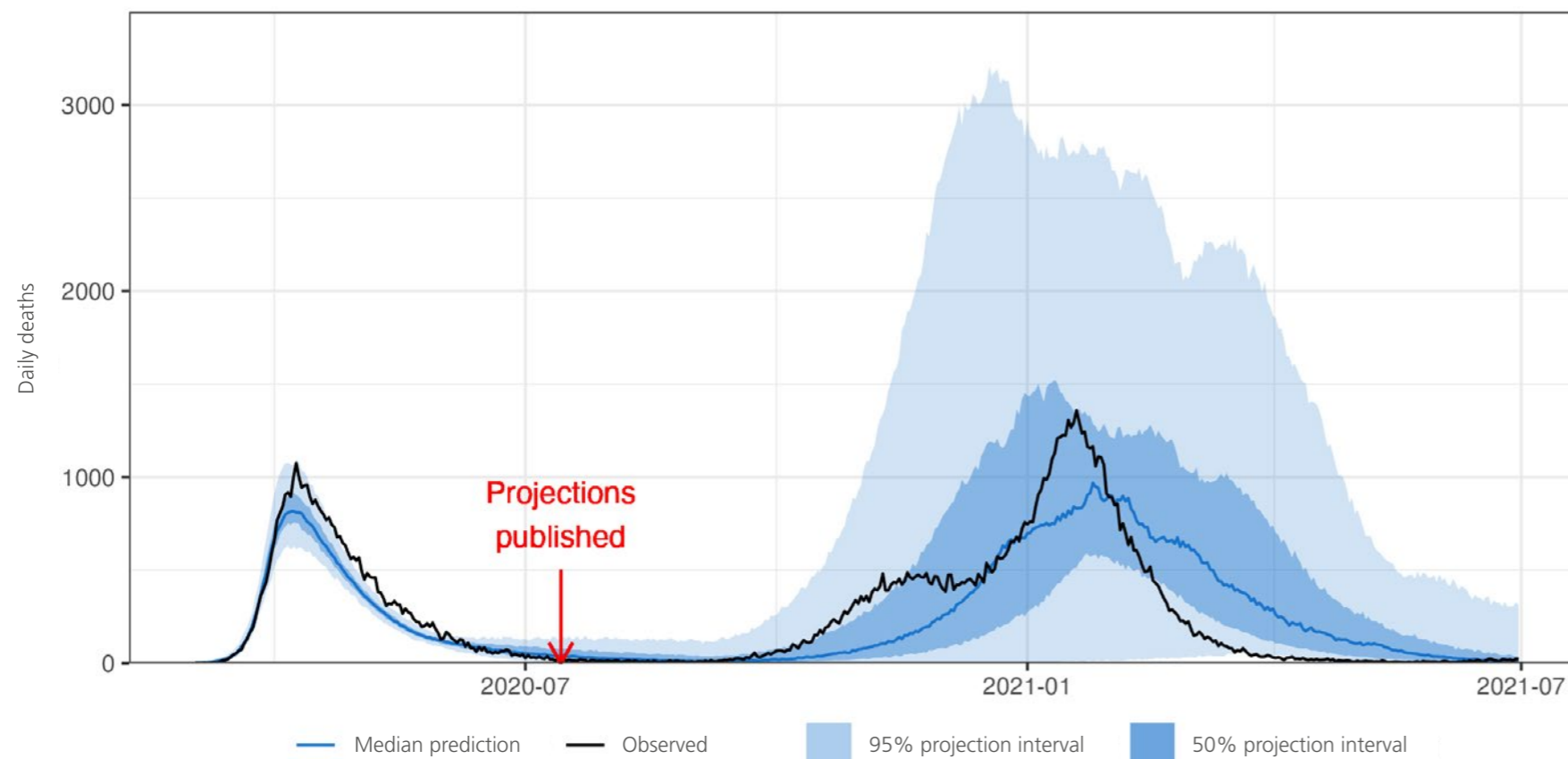
“It is for times like this that the Academy was created – and we will be needed more than ever in the coming years if biomedical and wider health research is to deliver effectively in responding to post-pandemic opportunities and challenges.”

Professor Dame Anne Johnson, Academy President

# Here are just some of our highlights from the past 18 months...

We brought patients and researchers together to offer expert policy advice

How have model projections fared against reality?



Reasonable worst case scenario projections from Academy of Medical Sciences report published 14 July 2020 (<https://tinyurl.com/y3dohq5c>). Observed deaths within 28 days of positive test (by day of death) from UK Coronavirus Dashboard

In July 2020, we said how the UK should prepare for its first winter with COVID-19. This was written in under eight weeks by researchers, patients and carers, including people 'shielding' and from minority ethnic backgrounds. Its stark warning of a potential 120,000 COVID-19 deaths over winter was followed by recommendations to work with the public on vaccination, test and trace, and reducing infections. The report was downloaded 230,000 times and extensively covered in the media.

Our models for a reasonable worst-case winter scenario closely matched daily deaths. The report was used by opposition leader Sir Keir Starmer to question Prime Minister Boris Johnson in Parliament.

Our follow-up report in July 2021 used the same team to review how COVID-19, flu and other viruses will interact in the future. This report was discussed in Parliament, referenced in the Government's Winter Plan, and cited at the launch of the 2021/22 winter flu vaccination campaign.



This independent report which I commissioned from @acmedsci sets out recommendations to prepare for the challenges ahead this winter. The report makes a valuable contribution to the scientific debate and it should help inform our continued response. -PV [acmedsci.ac.uk/file-download/...](https://acmedsci.ac.uk/file-download/...)

10:08 AM · Jul 15, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

222 Retweets 94 Quote Tweets 548 Likes



Academy Fellow Stephen Holgate and patient representative Lynn Laidlaw interviewed together about our COVID-19 winter policy work on BBC News in July 2021

“I very much enjoyed being part of the project and feeling part of something bigger. The Academy is fantastic at supporting and facilitating inclusive discussions.”

Lynn Laidlaw, member of the Academy’s patient and carer reference group for both COVID winter reports





## We doubled down on international collaboration

- Our autumn 2019 work on epidemic preparedness focused on collaborating across borders for global health security: a prescient warning for what was to come.
- We brought together researchers and policy makers from over 70 countries in online workshops. Themes included not only COVID-19 but also topics from international partners, spanning diagnostic devices to healthcare systems – with our free online talks attracting thousands of viewers.
- We empowered young people around the world to make sense of the pandemic through an online comic, developed by a team of 16-24 year olds from India, South Africa and the UK alongside Academy scientists. The comic has been viewed over 23,000 times and is published in English, Hindi and Xhosa. Teenagers from the project shared their experiences at the UK Independent Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies.



Online comic developed by a team of young people around the world with Academy scientists

## We championed issues around COVID-19 that too often get lost

We were the first to highlight the need for research on **how the pandemic impacts mental health**. In April 2020 we jointly published COVID-19 mental health and neuroscience research priorities, informed by surveys and discussions with over 2000 people. These research priorities were used to incentivise national mental health research projects.

We set up a free **COVID-19 drug development database**. We realised early on that even with vaccines, the world will still need safe, cheap and effective COVID-19 treatments. Our open access database, established in summer 2020, brings together 50+ preclinical research projects into COVID-19 treatments and is being used by the UK Government to work out which to prioritise.

## We helped people navigate competing voices and misinformation

We empowered our Fellows and researchers to speak up through blogs and thousands of responses to media enquiries with the Science Media Centre. Around 6,000 pieces of media coverage have referenced the Academy during the pandemic.

“The Academy of Medical Sciences is an invaluable resource, both for good science and great science communicators. The Academy has come up with the goods time and again. That’s important at the best of times, but even more valuable in the heat of a pandemic.”

Tom Feilden, Science Editor, BBC Radio 4 Today Programme

# We supported researchers

**As the pandemic took hold we responded to the huge need to support researchers as they moved to frontline NHS roles and laboratories closed.**

**We rapidly moved our events online.**

Opening events to wider audience meant attendees for some areas almost doubled.

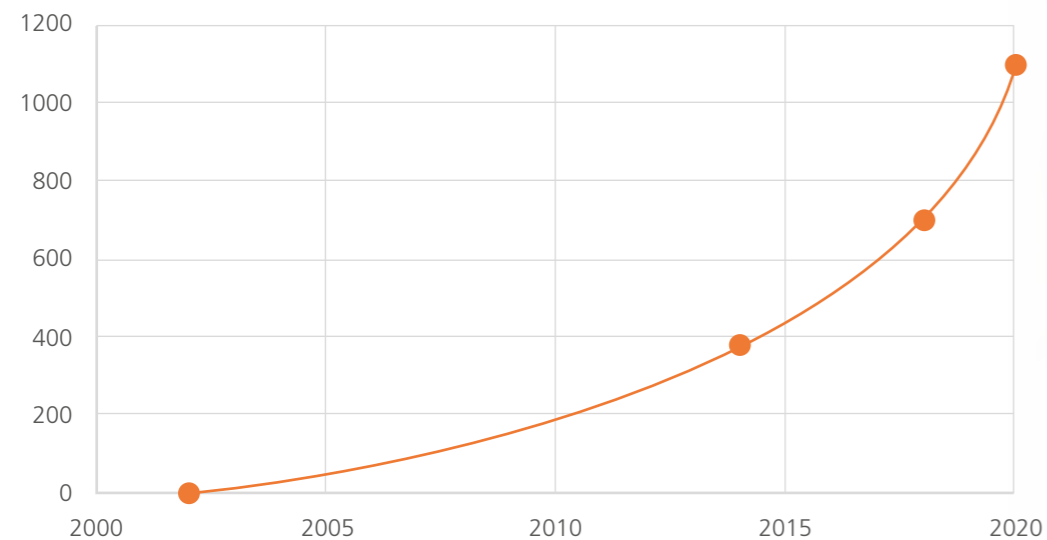
**We co-created online support communities.**

Our [COVID-19 career support space](#) grew through the pandemic to cover everything from PhD stress to intensive care shifts, and has had over 10,000 visits. Our first online community network brought together Academy researchers and alumni across disciplines and borders. Our [alumni network](#) has over 300 users from around the world and our online community is only beginning.

**We helped reduce future COVID-19 career disadvantage across our own grants and in the wider community.**

We led cross-sector funding forums and kept grant funding available, bringing together funders to distribute £10 million per year for the first time to over 250 awardees. Our grants team introduced [COVID-19 impact statements](#) and gave over 200 costed and no-cost extensions.

## Total mentoring pairs



Our flagship mentoring scheme moved online too, and in 2020 we reached a milestone of over **1000 mentoring pairs**.


“The mentorship provided by the Academy has been life and career changing for me.”

Dr Athanasios Saratzis, vascular surgeon and researcher

“Joining the Academy community for the first time was an enriching and life-changing experience. It is very exciting to continue to be part of this network of brilliant and inspiring clinicians and scientists through the new alumni programme.”

Dr Alexandra Santos, researcher and paediatric allergy consultant



A woman with dark curly hair tied back with a black headband is smiling and looking towards the right. She is wearing a white lab coat. In the foreground, the profile of another person's face is partially visible, looking towards the woman. The background is a clinical setting with a whiteboard.

“It can be easy to feel disadvantaged for helping out on the wards. It’s really reassuring to see the Academy finding some way to recognise the pandemic has affected everyone very differently.”

Dr Nicholas Evans, geriatric and stroke medicine doctor and researcher, and Academy grant awardee who used our COVID impact process

Researchers supported by the Academy continue to deliver major scientific achievements, from the UK’s national clinical trial for long-term recovery of COVID-19 patients, to changing NHS treatment guidelines across the lifespan, from premature birth to palliative care.

“Using this extenuating circumstances data in our grants for the first time has been a complicated process, but we’re committed to using it – and using it properly – to help ensure our grant decisions now and in the future are as fair as possible.”

Dr Clare McVicker, Head of Grants at the Academy

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“My research helped develop a UK-wide monitoring programme for infant brain injury, and I’m now working with the NHS to make sure babies are born in the right place. Without the Academy I definitely don’t think I’d be where I am now.”

Dr Chris Gale, researcher and consultant neonatologist



## We kept science centre stage

**Biomedical and health research has been at the heart of the UK's response to COVID-19 and will be central to our social and economic recovery.**

Previous economic research jointly supported by the Academy showed every £1 of public investment in medical research returns the equivalent of 25p every year, forever.

But UK science has been damaged by factors from COVID-19 to the uncertainty of leaving the European Union. We have worked to shape a new UK-EU relationship – demonstrating the value of UK association with Horizon Europe and ensuring funding for pan-European scientific organisations. We will continue to work with UK and European partners to secure UK participation in EU research programmes.

**We pushed the Government to deliver promised increases in research investment.** We gave evidence to the 2021 spending review and led a cross-sector letter to the Chancellor from 30+ scientific organisations. The resulting spending review has at long last set out a three-year rising budget for UK research.

“The Academy has shown how the nation’s health, medical research, and the healthcare industry are all deeply interconnected, through the pandemic and beyond. Their tireless work has been central to ensuring rising investment in UK health research.”

Dr June Raine, Chief Executive of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)





## We commit to tackling the big issues

- **Climate change:** In autumn 2021 we partnered with the Royal Society to show actions that tackle future climate change also deliver significant health benefits now. The report was presented at the COP26 summit in Glasgow to help put health at the centre of climate action.
- **Equality:** We accept bolder action is needed if UK science is to address the health needs of the whole population. We are investing time and resources in making our own systems fairer and will push to become a truly UK-wide institution.
- **Funding:** We are working to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of UK health science. We are calling for annual increases to public investment in research and development to reach £22bn annually by 2024/25.

**We are launching a new 10 year strategy for 2022-2032**

Academy of Medical Sciences   
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Our [#HealthyClimate](#) report with [@royalsociety](#) outlines how actions to tackle [#ClimateChange](#) in the future will also deliver health benefits now.

Report co-chair Professor Sir Andy Haines was at [#COP26](#) presenting our work - read his exclusive debrief [acmedsci.ac.uk/more/news/cop2...](#)



9:26 AM · Dec 3, 2021 · Twitter Web App

# We need your help

The pandemic has been a critical period for the Academy. Our Fellows, researchers and staff have risen to the challenge. Our expertise has never been needed more.

We are reaching out for your support.

We are an independent charity with no major endowments or legacy funding. Your donations provide crucial funding for areas of our work most in need.

If this is what we've done so far, imagine what we could do next.

**Get in touch at**  
**[www.acmedsci.ac.uk/donate](http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/donate)**  
**[fundraising@acmedsci.ac.uk](mailto:fundraising@acmedsci.ac.uk)**

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Medical Sciences**