



Letter of Information – Interview

When the Labs Closed: Graduate Students' & Postdoctoral Fellows' Experiences of Disrupted Research During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Purpose of the Study

We would like to invite you to take part in a study on the impact COVID-19 had on your research. The purpose of this interview is to examine the impact of research disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic on graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. Information gathered during this interview will be written up as a scholarly journal article and potentially presented at conferences. What we learn from this interview will help us identify areas of support needed by graduate students and postdoctoral fellows during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as support needed once the pandemic dissipates. We also want to identify best practices of how to quickly shut down laboratories, and provide support to students and fellows, that could be used if similar situations arise in the future.

You are eligible to take part in this study if you:

1. Are a graduate student or postdoctoral fellow in Canada
2. Engage in laboratory-based research
3. Have had your research stopped or paused by the COVID-19 pandemic

Procedures involved in the Research

You will be asked to complete one virtual interview. This interview is **voluntary**, you do not need to participate should you choose not to. The semi-structured interviews will be conducted from May 11 2020 to June 8, 2020. They will be done virtually using Zoom, a video conference technology that allows for the recording of meetings.

The interview will last between 30 minutes to 1 hour. To protect the privacy of the interviewee, the interviewee's camera will be turned off during the interview. Recordings of the interviews will be transcribed, coded and analyzed. Initial verification of data will be conducted through triangulation. If you wish to participate, please respond to the information email send out by the investigators.

Potential Benefits

This research may benefit you directly if your supervisor, department or faculty implements recommendations based on our findings. We hope what is learned as a result of this study can be used to inform what supports should be offered to graduate students and postdoctoral fellows during COVID-19

and once laboratory research resumes. These findings could also inform the development of best practices to quickly shut down laboratories. We would like to publish our findings so that they can be used design supports for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in the future.

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. You may feel uneasy or embarrassed answering questions about your feelings or worries related to COVID-19 and research disruption. You do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable.

Confidentiality

The data in this research will be **de-identified**, meaning information that could be used to identify you will be removed from the study. However, others may still be able to identify you based on references you make or detailed information you provide. We may display full quotations from descriptive sections as representative statements. Please keep this in mind in deciding what to tell us. We will also remove identifying information which is provided in narrative responses, such as if you mention your university name or names of colleagues.

By participating in the interview, participants agree not to make any unauthorized recordings of the content of a meeting or data collection session. All electronic data will be kept on a computer protected by an encryption, firewall, and password, where only the research team will have access to it. Once the study is complete, an archive of the data, without identifying information, will be maintained until publication. This will be deleted following publication of findings (within five years). The electronic cohort description data will be kept indefinitely as the data will be published.

This study will use the Zoom platform to collect data, which is an externally hosted cloud-based service. A link to their privacy policy is available here (<https://zoom.us/privacy>). Please note that whilst this service is approved for collecting data in this study by the Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board, there is a small risk with any platform such as this of data that is collected on external servers falling outside the control of the research team. If you are concerned about this, we would be happy to make alternative arrangements for you to participate, such as by telephone. Please talk to the researcher if you have any concerns.

Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can decide to stop (withdraw), at any time, even after giving consent or part-way through the study. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. Information provided up to the point where you withdraw will be kept unless you request that it be removed. You can withdraw from the study within 1 week of completing your interview. After this time point withdrawal from the study is not possible, as all data will be aggregated and it will be impossible to separate individual comments.

Information about the Study Results

We expect to have initial analysis completed by late June 2020. A pre-print publication will be uploaded to bioRxiv in early July 2020.. When our research article is published in a peer reviewed journal, we will make a summary of the publication available on the Truant Laboratory Website (<https://raytruantlab.ca/>).

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact us at: truanttr@mcmaster.ca or suartce@mcmaster.ca.

This interview is part of a study that has been reviewed by the [Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board \(HiREB\)](#). The HiREB protocol number associated with this interview is 10832. You are free to complete this interview or not. If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is being conducted, please contact HiREB. The HiREB is responsible for ensuring that participants are informed of the risks associated with the research, and that participants are free to decide if participation is right for them. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please call the Office of the Chair, Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board at 905.521.2100 x 42013.