world identifies, responds to, and recovers from health emergencies by uniting different data sources, new digital tools, public health, and science. It is a call to action for the world’s best and brightest minds to contribute ideas and solutions towards achieving this aim.

With awards of up to £2 million, from the total prize fund of up to £10 million, the Trinity Challenge is seeking digitally focused ideas on how the world can identify, respond, and recover from health emergencies.

We declare no competing interests.

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The ultra-connected generation would like to disconnect now

John Donne warned, “No man is an island.” The COVID-19 pandemic is a reminder not only of the interconnectedness of humans to each other, but also to their environment. Guided by the short-term imperatives of a globalised system, growth and productivity have been prioritised at the expense of animals’ natural habitats. As a result, human-animal interactions are more frequent and zoonotic viruses, such as SARS-CoV-2, are more likely to contaminate humans. Undoubtedly, societies will have to integrate a One Health perspective into policy design: environmental issues and animal health should be part of the approach to future health policies.

Just as humans exist in an ecosystem, they also coexist in a social network. A year ago, societies implemented drastic measures to flatten the curve (of the spread of COVID-19), and individuals put aside freedoms for the common good. These changes were a great feat of solidarity. But as time passed, these new rules sparked moral dilemmas in daily choices. The current young generation faces constant conflict between contributing to the economy, enjoying their youth, and risking their own and others’ health. This moral fatigue is just one of the new psychological challenges posed by the pandemic.

Although digitalisation has thankfully allowed the continuation of life with minor alterations, the sustainability of a virtually based society is not evident. The overdose of screen time and social media might ultimately lead to a shift in behaviour. Now, more than ever, there is an awareness of what can be accomplished remotely, and what cannot. It is our hope that the digital generation does not soon forget the struggles of the pandemic and places great importance on real relationships, and that it does not take for granted the opportunity to be present in the real world.

This generation, already more digitalised than any other before it, is now being forced into further reliance on technology for daily activities. Red eyes, sore backs, and migraines: the ultra-connected generation would like to disconnect now. But there is no cure for so-called Zoom fatigue when even the doctor is behind a screen. As the prevalence of depression and anxiety rises in all populations, students are among the most affected. The crisis in mental health has been a long time coming. Addressing the challenges ahead will require long-term efforts, not just crisis management. Building on existing strategies to include health considerations in policy making across all sectors, the next logical step is to integrate mental health.

As the post-pandemic world gets closer, humanity will only face more challenges posed by an increasingly digitalised society. It is necessary to learn from the mistakes of the pandemic. Policies should consider the interconnectedness of humans, animals, the natural environment, social wellbeing, and mental health. More than a cry for help, this is a call to action.

We declare no competing interests. All authors contributed equally.

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