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Researchers call for improved national coordination of Australian COVID-19 trials

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A study looking at the landscape of COVID-19 research in Australia shows an impressive rapid response in clinical trials to the pandemic, but researchers say the haste in funding, development and implementation highlight new challenges.

In a study published in the Medical Journal of Australia, University of Sydney researchers looked at clinical trials conducted in Australia focused on the COVID-19 pandemic between 1 January to 16 November 2020.

They identified crucial research areas which were overlooked, such as there being no trials on public health communication or community transmission prevention related to COVID-19.

There was a significant emphasis on treatment trials (60 percent, 34 out of 56 COVID-19 focused trials).

The researchers state extensive media coverage and public opinion may have misled research prioritisation. For instance, there may have been too many uncoordinated hydroxycholorquine trials, randomising too many patients to non-effective or even potentially harmful treatments.

There was also a concerning lack of collaboration between clinical trials, with 80 percent of trials stating they are not planning to share data.

Thus, they are calling for infrastructure to make collaboration easier for Australian researchers, such as funding for data sharing efforts and minimum standards for collaboration and data sharing.