

Researcher studies international cooperation in fighting COVID-19

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Credit: University of Colorado Denver

Jongeun You, a researcher at the University of Colorado Denver, recently released a study looking at how a more global approach would have far-reaching societal benefits in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. You discovered that while many governments had a restrictive and nationalistic response to the pandemic, they also focused on international cooperation to provide new insights to the rest of the world.

COVID-19 challenged governments to rely on their own resources and pandemic policies as the world turned away from a globalist approach to fight the virus. Since the beginning, national governments have implemented border restrictions and blocked exports of medical supplies. The large number of bilateral COVID-19 vaccine deals between [high-income countries](#) and vaccine producers hindered the ability of low-income countries to access COVID-19 vaccines.

However, You argues that a more open approach and [international collaboration](#) is needed to tackle COVID-19 and future pandemics. Restrictive measures impede necessary aid and technical support against the virus and disrupt international economic activities.

You's research into South Korea's response showed that while the country focused on its own population, it shared knowledge with the international community, supplied medical resources to the rest of the world, and helped to strengthen public health systems in developing countries. South Korea held hundreds of webinars and conference calls with other nations on pandemic policy. For instance, Special webinars on COVID-19 for policy and technology sharing, also called "K-bangyeok" webinars, reached over 3,780 people from 118 countries.

South Korea was also able to continue exporting medical supplies to countries in need while avoiding business losses. Between January and September 2020, South Korea saw a 48% increase in medical exports from the previous year. With the surge in COVID-19-related exports of test kits and [face masks](#), the country saw growth in the medical industry. In addition, South Korea was committed to assisting developing countries build up their pandemic response capacity.

"Advancing international cooperation is also critical to avoid a future pandemic crisis," said You. "Since pandemics can spread rapidly from one country to another, when one country struggles to tackle a pandemic,

a wave of infection is likely to occur in any and all countries."

According to a worldwide survey by the United Nations, 95% of respondents agreed that countries need to work together to address global issues like the current pandemic.

"The COVID-19 [pandemic](#) shows how interconnected we all are," said You. "The [international community](#) must move forward by preparing in the face of complexity rather than by building walls."

More information: Jongeun You, Advancing international cooperation as a strategy for managing pandemics, *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration* (2021). [DOI: 10.1080/23276665.2020.1866624](https://doi.org/10.1080/23276665.2020.1866624)

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