

## “COVID-19, Digital Media, and Health”

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The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has profoundly impacted our lives around the globe. More than 60 million confirmed cases and more than 1.6 million deaths had been reported to the World Health Organization as of December. In addition to the adverse risks to physical well-being in this pandemic, social distancing measures, and the perceived threat of the virus pose further challenges to mental and social well-being. In these trying and uncertain times, digital media play a central role. On the one hand, digital media can create opportunities to improve individuals' health, for instance, by connecting to others in times of social distancing, by providing access to crucial public health information, or by allowing a safe way to maintain a daily work routine. On the other hand, users might face several obstacles related to digital media use. For instance, the constant checking of the latest news might lead to information overload, and the constant online connection results in new forms of stress, including “Zoom fatigue.” Moreover, while digital media use during social isolation might serve as a coping tool by connecting with others to overcome feelings of loneliness, seeing others' presumably successful coping strategies in their social media feeds might lead to feelings of failure when not being as productive or positive in these times. These examples highlight how the COVID-19 pandemic and digital media use are closely intertwined.

This Special Section invites research addressing the lack of systematic knowledge about how digital media truly affects individuals' health during the pandemic, and, *vice-versa*, which impact individuals' health in times of the pandemic has on their digital media use. Authors are invited to contribute **theoretical and empirical studies** investigating the differential bi-directional effects of digital media use and health, qualitative studies, and review articles enriching our understanding of the interrelation between the two in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Authors are invited to submit research—but are not limited to—addressing the following sub-topics:

- Digital media use as coping tool during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Social connectedness through digital media in times of social distancing
- Online misinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic and psychological distress
- Digital media use for smart working and homeschooling
- Digital healthcare and social support during the COVID-19 pandemic

**Deadline for submissions:** Manuscripts are to be submitted by **March 1, 2021**, via mail to Dr. Kathrin Karsay, [kathrin.karsay@kuleuven.be](mailto:kathrin.karsay@kuleuven.be). The submission guideline can be accessed via [ijoc.org](http://ijoc.org). We will perform a “fast-track review process” to ensure timely publication and dissemination. After editorial review of the full papers, we will then send the ten best-ranked manuscripts for formal peer review in the IJoC system. Final publication will be in Q3 of 2022. Any questions concerning this call for papers may be directed to Dr. Kathrin Karsay.