Call for transparency of COVID-19 models

A hallmark of science is the open exchange of knowledge. At this time of crisis, it is more important than ever for scientists around the world to openly share their knowledge, expertise, tools, and technology. Scientific models are critical tools for anticipating, predicting, and responding to complex biological, social, and environmental crises, including pandemics. They are essential for guiding regional and national governments in designing health, social, and economic policies to manage the spread of disease and lessen its impacts. However, presenting modeling results alone is not enough. Scientists must also openly share their model code so that the results can be replicated and evaluated.

Given the necessity for rapid response to the coronavirus pandemic, we need many eyes to review and collectively vet model assumptions, parameterizations, and algorithms to ensure the most accurate modeling possible. Transparency engenders public trust and is the best defense against misunderstanding, misuse, and deliberate misinformation about models and their results. We need to engage as many experts as possible for improving the ability of models to represent epidemiological, social, and economic dynamics so that we can best respond to the crisis and plan effectively to mitigate its wider impacts.

We strongly urge all scientists modeling the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and its consequences for health and society to rapidly and openly publish their code (along with specifying the type of data required, model parameterizations, and any available documentation) so that it is accessible to all scientists around the world. We offer sincere thanks to the many teams that are already sharing their models openly. Proprietary black boxes and code withheld for competitive

motivations have no place in the global crisis we face today. As soon as possible, please place your code in a trusted digital repository (*1*) so that it is findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable (*2*).

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COMPETING INTERESTS

All authors have signed on behalf of the listed organizations only. J.-A.A. is the head of the Systems Modeling and Simulation, Brain and Mind Centre at the University of Sydney in Australia but does not represent that institution here. B.F. is affiliated with the Advanced Systems Analysis Program at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Austria but does not represent that organization.

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