

Transcript Details

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Integrating Scenario Modeling into Clinical Decision Making

ReachMD Announcer:

You're listening to *Clinician's Roundtable* on ReachMD. On this episode, we'll hear from Dr. Sara Loo, who's an Assistant Scientist in the Department of International Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and a member of the coordination team of the US Scenario Modeling Hub. She'll be discussing her research on how scenario modeling can guide vaccine policy and clinical decision making.

Here's Dr. Loo now.

Dr. Loo:

I'm here representing the US Scenario Modeling Hub and the work that I've been part of over the last few years. If you haven't heard of the hub, we are what we call a modeling consortium made up of infectious disease modeling teams from across the United States, and what we seek to do is collectively provide longer-term scenario projections for respiratory diseases under key uncertainties of interest for public health policy.

What that basically means is we coordinate as a hub—a number of modeling teams across the US—to produce these projections at timeframes looking up to a few months ahead. It's gone up to a year into the future under different sets of scenarios—for example, questions regarding uncertainties about vaccine policies or emerging variants for COVID, and so on and so forth.

The question of how clinicians can interpret modeling studies in day-to-day practice is a really interesting one. These projections that we make are based on certain assumptions and should be understood within the context of these assumptions. So, for example, we make assumptions about vaccine coverage. We say, "In the next year, it's going to look like 'x.'" With vaccination rates declining and some of the recommendations shifting to a more shared decision-making framework, I think it's important to be able to use modeling studies as a strong base of evidence for the benefits of vaccination, not just for yourself, but for others as well.

We know that there's a lot of uncertainty in our results. We don't just show one single trajectory; there's a whole range of what the future might look like. But even in the context of those uncertainties, these results of the benefit of vaccination still hold true, and I think that can be quite powerful and empowering.

I think, through the COVID pandemic, there was a growing understanding of what scenario modeling could do. There were models popping up of future projections all over the place. Some of those were good; some of those were bad, some might say. But I think one way this could be better integrated into public health decision making is just as an additional piece of evidence for comparing these different futures, which are often very uncertain, and this hub process is especially useful for that.

I think another way this could be better integrated into public health decision-making is to continue to work on ways to consider these results and utilize them at a smaller scale. We often, as a hub, focus on national-level results, but we do produce results at a state level, and these projections are all publicly available online. So, I'm hopeful that being able to better address more specific questions that are relevant at the state level or being able to converse with state-level decision makers or epidemiologists, or even at a finer scale, is something that we could look more into in the future, especially as the vaccine policy landscape changes.

ReachMD Announcer:

That was Dr. Sara Loo talking about how we can integrate scenario modeling into clinical practice. To access this and other episodes in our series, visit *Clinician's Roundtable* on ReachMD.com, where you can Be Part of the Knowledge. Thanks for listening!