



Football at the Heart of Research

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Background:

In the UK and Italy, a lot of medical research is supported by charities, which had their income slashed during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This might have catastrophic consequences, slowing scientific progress and put at risk the career of thousands of researchers in these Countries.

Objectives:

- Create a fundraising campaign to increase public awareness of these issues.
- Establish a network and collaboration with and amongst research charities in the UK and Italy.
- Give international visibility to football “minorities” (non-professional teams, young and/or female football players).
- Enhance my organisational and communication skills, as well as my proficiency and understanding of different social media network platforms.
- Demonstrate my capacity to generate original ideas and implement them.

Methods:

Between February & March 2021, I approached three charities that recently gave me research support



- We developed a fundraising plan and a communication strategy.
- I e-mailed professional football teams in Italy (n=100) and UK (n=68) and contacted hundreds of football players via Facebook or Instagram asking them to support this initiative and donate merchandise or kit used in official matches which could subsequently be auctioned on eBay.
- I identified and engaged with representatives of football minorities, who also donated memorabilia:
 - ✓ **Adrian Galliani**, a young footballer at Nottingham
 - ✓ **Alia Guagni**, an Italian woman football player
 - ✓ **Team Diamante**, a non-professional team from my home village

- Two crowdfunding pages on Gofund and Paypal were also created.

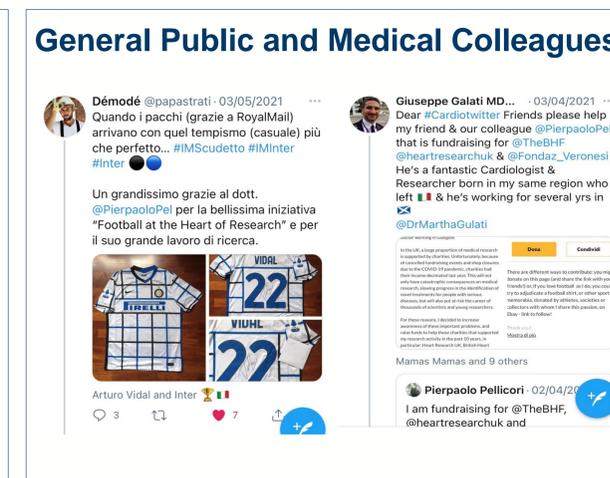
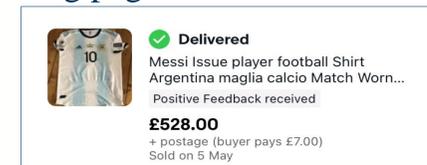
We agreed that all income would be shared equally amongst the three charities.

Results:

The campaign started on the 2nd of April. By the 12th of May 2021, I have sold twenty items on eBay, generating £1,800, with an additional £1,500 being raised on crowdfunding pages.

The most expensive football shirt was sold for **£528**.

Campaign-reach was global and it was well supported.



Ad-hoc meetings were held with members of the three charities, either individually or as a group. A final debriefing meeting is planned for June 2021, when this campaign will terminate.

Conclusions:

I utilised leadership and managerial concepts acquired during the Emerging Leaders Programme to tackle a serious but neglected problem caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative has helped me find a new set of skills and expanded my social and professional network.



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Additional acknowledgment: I am grateful to Nicola Micatrotta (logo), and Mario Ferrantino and Mario Giordano who donated some shirts. **Conflict of interest:** I collect football shirts.