Six entries featuring notable explanatory and investigative reporting on the global COVID-19 pandemic are among the winners of the 2020 AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Awards.

Ed Yong, a staff writer for The Atlantic, won for in-depth reporting on the likely course of the pandemic and the patchwork American response. A team of reporters for Kaiser Health News and the Associated Press won for an investigation of how ill-equipped state and local health programs had become when the pandemic hit. Sarah Kaplan of The Washington Post was honored for her sensitive look at how the novel coronavirus killed one of the early victims of the disease.

“I’m incredibly honored, especially since science journalism has never been so necessary, urgent, or vibrant,” Yong said. He thanked his editors for “not only polishing my prose but also giving me the space, time, and mandate to rise to the demands of this year.”

The Kaiser Health News–AP collaboration spotlighted the chronic underfunding of state and local public health systems, a story that had drawn less attention than the widely criticized federal response to the pandemic. “Public health workers are sometimes paid so little that they qualify for public aid,” said Lauren Weber of Kaiser Health News. “Working seven-day weeks for months on end, they fear pay freezes, public backlash, and losing their jobs—even amid a pandemic. It is an honor to tell their story.”

The winners will receive their awards in a virtual ceremony held in conjunction with the 2021 AAAS Annual Meeting in February.
2020 AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Award winners
Earl Lane and Emily Hughes

Science 370 (6523), 1425.
DOI: 10.1126/science.370.6523.1425