

## Editorial

## Reflecting on the Past Year – A World after COVID-19

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**Corresponding Author:** Dr. Asif Malik Humayun**Email:** doctormalikasif@gmail.com**Introduction**

Most people celebrating the new year eve on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 were unaware of what was going to hit the world. For physicians, the gravity of the situation had hit home by late winter – early spring across the globe.<sup>1</sup>

To start off with – the fear of unknown was surreal. That quickly turned into gloom. The physical and emotional toll was overwhelming. Emotional burden of the pandemic began to interfere with our ability to be a ‘normal’ human being. Physicians were (and still are) pushed to their limits but we keep going!

For months now, we have all lived and worked under enormous mental and physical daily pressure. The emotional strain has been put to one side as we deal with the biggest battle that we have ever known. United by a drive to give the best care to our patients and a sense of ‘this is what we trained for’ we keep going.

By April, we had already seen the change in our day-to-day life; the change to having to wear additional personal protective equipment more often (or fighting for it); the change from working in our usual specialties to working fulltime on general medical wards treating COVID-19 patients. Medical wards and Intensive care units were rapidly filled; specialty staff were redeployed to acute and general, research staff returned to clinical practice and some senior consultants took charge of wards and patients they would never usually manage to support and protect junior colleagues because they had to keep going.

We have lost friends, colleagues, and family members. Financial losses have also hit many. There have been huge losses in on going research activities, training and non-covid medical activities. Many physicians have had COVID-19 themselves. Others have covered for colleagues with the disease, while worrying about them as friends.<sup>2</sup> Some of us have even had to care for

colleagues and friends in our own hospital, putting our emotions to one side so we can remain competent and professional, and we keep going.

And in the background, we all have a personal story to tell: the effect on us, and on our families, who love and support us so that we can support others. Nearly a third of doctors in UK have sought either informal or formal mental health support and a third of trainees said the pandemic had made them question medicine as a career.<sup>3</sup> Then there are healthcare systems (like in Pakistan) where taking about mental health can be seen a taboo. We know it has been difficult – an understatement in the context of what we’ve all seen and going through.<sup>4</sup> Despite all that, we should be proud of what we are and what we have done so far and we keep going.

The challenges over PPE, and other decisions taken in pandemic response globally will surely be considered in the public inquiries that we anticipate will take place when this is all finally (hopefully) ‘over’. The primary aim of all inquiries must be to identify and recommend changes, so we’re better prepared for next time. Were we prepared or just flying blind? Going with the wind – I think! A huge degree of honesty and frankness will be needed if we are to learn lessons. For now, this pandemic has only underlined how important the proper funding for medical science is to deliver the best care for our patients, and giving physicians a fulfilling career. Against all the odds, we will keep going....

**References**

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