

Reflections on the Pandemic

It seems like a year ago that we were all gathered in San Diego for the 2020 Biophysical Society Annual Meeting. So many changes, so much tragedy and stress. The literal meaning of “pandemic” is that it affects everyone, and that is certainly true of this one. Yet everyone is affected differently. I wanted with this editorial to reach out to our *Biophysical Journal* community with a message of solidarity, and to recognize that some of us have had it much harder than others.

For those of us who are career scientists, the proportion of job losses is lower than for others, but within our ranks there are many discrepancies in circumstances. I think first of those of us with children, trying to work from home while supervising schoolwork and play. It’s a huge challenge, without the availability of all the usual aids — the summer camp, the overnight stay with friends, the local pool, not to mention no looking forward to a nice vacation. Then there is the uncertainty about the start of school in the Fall. Yet many friends have commented that the silver lining to their forced proximity to their children is a richer family closeness.

Another cohort that deserves our thoughts is that of the university professors who are in charge of undergraduate education. The consensus seems to be that the safest option is to conduct classes online, but some universities are weighing in-person classes, a daunting prospect when we consider the likelihood that students in residence on campus may not be as careful with social distancing as they should. The design of online classes for practical or laboratory courses will be a major challenge for our colleagues.

It’s a particularly worrying time for graduate students, postdocs, and junior faculty and those with the tenure clock ticking. With labs and offices locked down (or opening with limited personnel), how to move research along is highly problematic. For those who have data already, the lockdown gives a golden opportunity to explore and analyze, without the usual distractions. However, if experiments are incom-

plete, there is limited analysis that can be done. Planning, literature research, online conversation and collaboration can all be done, but after several months, it begins to feel that we are constantly running around the same circles.

Here at *Biophysical Journal* we have been working from home since March. We have seen a steady stream of excellent submissions, and our reviewers and editors have been keeping up with them very well. Review deadlines have been relaxed somewhat to allow for the difficulties associated with the pandemic lockdown. Meetings have been held online — and as a precautionary measure, the Biophysical Society Council has decided that the Annual Meeting in 2021 will be exclusively virtual. It will be an interesting challenge to organize! One advantage of such an arrangement is that we can potentially include many participants who might not be able to attend in person, due to travel distance and finances. We are planning a virtual Biophysical Journal Symposium for the meeting, which will highlight the excellent science published in the journal and we also hope to schedule a virtual Meet the Editors session.

We are already beginning to see the first submissions describing work related to the novel coronavirus. Tamar Schlick has taken the initiative together with three colleagues to prepare a Call for Papers for a special issue of the journal focused on the biophysics of the novel coronavirus. The deadline for submission is November 15, 2020, and we urge everyone to consider contributing to this highly topical collection.

In the meantime, we wish all of our readers, authors, reviewers, and editors the best of health, and look forward to the day when we can meet again in person!

H. Jane Dyson^{1,2,*}

¹Editor-in-Chief *Biophysical Journal* and

²*Integrative Structural and Computational Biology, The Scripps Research Institute, La Jolla, California*

*Correspondence: dyson@scripps.edu

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