



## Plastic surgery during the COVID-19 pandemic times

Horacio F. Mayer<sup>1</sup> · Paolo Persichetti<sup>2</sup>

Published online: 7 May 2020

© Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany, part of Springer Nature 2020

“Above all, do not fear difficult moments. The best comes from them.”

Rita Levi-Montalcini (Italian scientist Nobel for Medicine)

Today, we are all living through difficult moments due to a new virus named COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) which has led to a global pandemic. The infection started in China in November 2019 and has spread all over the world with more than 128,000 global deaths and over 2,000,000 cases up to now [1]. Epidemics have marked history, even literature. Just think of the plague in 1630 made in the novel “I promessi sposi” (The Betrothed) by Alessandro Manzoni which describes the arrival of the plague in Milan and inevitably brings us to what is happening today. “That stubbornness to deny the plague was naturally giving way and getting lost, as the disease spread, and spread due to contact and practice.” When the plague hit London, Isaac Newton was a student at Trinity College and was sent home to continue his studies. The year he spent away was considered his “*annus mirabilis*” (wonderful year) which allowed him to develop his theory of gravity. We must perhaps remember the example Newton set and use this time wisely to start or continue those delayed research projects awaiting conclusion.

The crisis we are experiencing today is certainly marked by speed and immediacy: speed, in the transmission of the virus with the constant increase in contamination, and immediacy, the individual awareness of the world drama which makes us

feel united by the same fate. The World Health Organization (WHO) [2] and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from the US Department of Health and Human Services [3] are publishing up-to-date information about COVID-19 as well as recommendations on how to curb spread of this infectious disease. Indeed, the globalization of information allows us immediate access to the progress of medical knowledge making scientists more cohesive in the common fight against the virus. The mandatory reshaping of treatment priorities that has changed the face of our clinics and hospitals can be an opportunity for those doctors not directly involved with COVID-19 (for example plastic surgeons) to adapt their activities and personal attitudes to explore new paths of treatments. Furthermore, as the majority of private plastic surgery clinics are closed or have stopped doing cosmetic surgeries, many plastic surgeons in the USA and Canada are ready to lend their ventilators to public hospitals to help with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tutorials and webinars make it possible to share ideas among scientists all over the world, and they can also help us to transfer correct information to patients and their relatives while assisting them even in their own homes [4, 5]. Telemedicine can deliver clinical information and promote active discussion between clinicians and patients in order to reserve post-operative follow-ups only for those patients who really need it, thus avoiding interhuman contacts and, therefore, contagion [6]. Telemedicine could be a valid opportunity to maintain adequate levels of efficiency and patient satisfaction.

Once again, mankind was convinced that the world obeys men’s commands, but this pandemic has made us realize that we are but a little cog in the wheel and we have a set place in the natural order. We have suddenly realized how fragile we are and how easy it is to upset our lives, influencing every activity, thought, and relationship. There have been many cases of plague and war in history, and humanity has been unprepared to deal with them. These were the topics in Albert Camus’ 1947 masterpiece, “The Plague.” The quarantine period can provide a moment of reflection for patients too,

✉ Horacio F. Mayer  
horacio.mayer@hospitalitaliano.org.ar

<sup>1</sup> Department of Plastic Surgery, Hospital Italiano de Buenos Aires, University of Buenos Aires School of Medicine (UBA) and Hospital Italiano de Buenos Aires University Institute (IUHIBA), Buenos Aires, Argentina

<sup>2</sup> Unit of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Campus Bio-Medico University of Rome, Rome, Italy

when seeking the real meaning of their lives and the priorities of human values could help them to give meaning to every individual's welfare in harmony with nature. It is up to us to turn this moment of global crisis into an opportunity of progress.

“The crisis is the greatest blessing for people and nations, because the crisis brings progress. Creativity comes from anxiety as the day comes from the dark night”

Albert Einstein

### Compliance with ethical standards

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

**Ethical approval** For this kind of article, formal consent from a local ethics committee is not required.

### References

1. Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center (2020) Available at: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu>. Accessed April 15, 2020
2. World Health Organization (2020) Coronavirus (COVID-19). Available at: [www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab\\_1](http://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1). Accessed April 14, 2020
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) Coronavirus (COVID-19). Available at: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html). Accessed April 14, 2020
4. Wagner F, Knipfer C, Holzinger D, Ploder O, Nkenke E (2019) Webinars for continuing education in oral and maxillofacial surgery: the Austrian experience. *J Craniomaxillofac Surg* 47(4):537–541
5. Luze H, Nischwitz SP, Kotzbeck P, Kamolz LP (2020) Can we use Google trends to estimate the demand for plastic surgery? *Eur J Plast Surg*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00238-020-01647-7>
6. Funderburk CD, Batulis NS, Zelones JT, Fisher AH, Prock KL, Markov NP, Evans AE, Nigriny JF (2019) Innovations in the plastic surgery care pathway: using telemedicine for clinical efficiency and patient satisfaction. *Plast Reconstr Surg* 144(2):507–516

**Publisher's note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.