

What has COVID-19 taken from us and brought instead?

Dear Editor,

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus had dramatic impact throughout the world. It was completely unexpected for most of us, and we were not prepared at all to change our daily routines. When the first cases of deaths due to the novel coronavirus were announced, the first reaction was an acute interest followed by some degree of ignorance and many people thought that the situation was being exaggerated. In a very short time, the novel coronavirus became extremely popular in the media and sat right at the centre of attraction. The precautions to be taken, risks and threats, mechanisms of infection, treatment modalities, possibilities of developing vaccines and/or medicines, etc., were the topics discussed at all times. The first case was diagnosed in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, and WHO upgraded the outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) to the level of pandemic on 12 March 2020 (WHO, 2020).

Soon after observing the increase in the number of cases, came the lockdown! Schools were closed, most of the businesses including governmental or private dental clinics were stopped, and people were at home most of the times. It became very limited if not impossible to visit parents, relatives or friends. Social distancing became part of our daily lives, no more handshaking, no more hugs, no more gatherings, parties, celebrations or even condolences to those who lost their loved ones due to COVID-19. Nothing was normal any more. But, what does normal mean?

Before this outbreak, many people were always in a hurry, running to catch up with so many things, had little time to share with their families. Now it seemed as if we had an endless time. It was like falling into a bottomless pit. A big dilemma has started to shape our lives, almost no schedules, no deadline, but on the other hand the first and biggest ever limitation! Freedom to stay at home, but then no freedom outside!

Priorities and worries changed completely. Today, there are still so many unanswered questions. This worldwide crisis can be taken as an opportunity to re-think our routines, judge ourselves and increase our awareness. Time is relative, but not endless. During the quarantine days, people realised that time is so precious, meeting and hugging loved ones is priceless. It is important to be aware of what we have, be thankful and grasp what we have, and respect to life as a whole.


Nothing will be the same from now on. Short-term and long-term changes not only in social life but also in dental profession have already appeared. Guidelines from various scientific and professional authorities are being released. The major concern behind these guidelines is safety for dental care providers and patients. Moreover, some significant changes in the methodology of training in dental schools are expected. Currently, online didactic courses are replacing the classroom lessons and digital simulations and/or phantoms are replacing the face-to-face preclinical or clinical practices. The difficulties and limitations faced in this field will lead development of new technologies for education and training of dental care professionals.

Completely new protocols for dental interventions are already established that are updated frequently. These cover three phases: the procedures before patient's appointment and arrival to the clinic; the procedures during the interventions in the clinic; and finally the procedures after the patient's departure. Triage of patients is likely to be a mandatory part of our profession for a long-time period. A new concept "slow dentistry" has been introduced that means decreasing the number of patients treated on a daily basis and increasing the intervals between patients to reduce the risk of cross infection and also to protect the clinicians, nurses and the staff at the front desk.

A quota from the famous fairy tale (Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll) summarises the present conditions: "It doesn't matter which way you go, if you don't know where you want to get to." Let's take this outbreak from the positive side, be realistic but not pessimistic, think and work harder to arrive the safe harbour for our lives and profession!

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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