

Dear Readers,

Since the last issue of the IJVM the world has turned upside-down. Suddenly, as if out of nowhere everyone knows that there is a virus called “Corona” which has been given a name: COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has hit our world hard. No matter where one lives on our planet, its effects are being felt. At the time of writing the disease has been confirmed in 6,586,100 humans, killing 388,250 and affecting 227 countries world-wide.

Of course, this is not the first corona pandemic: During the past twenty years, four coronaviruses have been identified which caused large-scale disease outbreaks—Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in 2012, and Swine Acute Diarrhea Syndrome (SADS) in 2017. The first two in humans and the third in pigs. Therefore, the present pandemic is probably not the last but something we may have to live with for many years to come, much like influenza, it is here to stay.

The three lessons we learnt during this epidemic were social distancing, wearing facemasks and washing our hands. These are the elementary ways to stay healthy. Shutdowns and reducing contact to as few people as possible played a positive role in reducing the spread of the contagion, a different life style from what we are used to.

For me personally this is my second encounter with a pandemic. The first was in 1953 when I was 5 years old in South Africa during the polio epidemic. Firstly I remember that we stayed at home. In addition, my mother instructed us to sleep between 2 and 4 in the afternoon. When we asked why, we were told, “to make us strong”. This may sound naïve, but taking into account the absence of a vaccine, the lack of treatment and the frightful messages we received daily of another child contacting the disease, this was just another hope that by sleeping in the afternoon we might build up some strength to surmount the disease. Only a desperate mother with a lot of trepidation and care could make this demand.

Clearly, the present epidemic is going to change our lives in the long run, and hopefully and optimistically, for the better.

In the meantime, stay healthy by following all the recommendations.

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