A journey through and beyond a “perfect storm”: the COVID-19 pandemic

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Dear Readers,

Among other things, the COVID-19 pandemic will likely be recalled as the “perfect storm” that exposed countless weaknesses and alarming deficiencies in healthcare systems throughout the world. As we reflect on the present scenario, we should therefore cast an eye towards the future and begin thinking seriously about the way endocrinology and metabolism services should be organized in the post-COVID-19 era. If you have not already done so already, please take a look at the statement published by the European Society of Endocrinology (<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12020-020-02294-5>) in our April issue: it provides a detailed picture of the endocrinological/metabolic pathologies being encountered in the context of COVID-19 [1].

In my previous editorial, I encouraged clinicians and researchers to send *Endocrine* their personal experiences with COVID-19 and endocrine and metabolic diseases [2]. We have already received numerous contributions, and our editors and reviewers are busily reviewing them all. The May issue contains the first two contributions in this section that have already been accepted.

As the storm shows at least some signs of abating, the challenges facing us appear increasingly complex and multifaceted. We hope to provide our readers with insights into these complexities, including certain aspects that may well have been overlooked, and if possible to view the challenges facing us through the eyes of our patients. While the storm was raging, most of our outpatient activities had to be discontinued, and many staff endocrinologists were transferred to internal medicine wards so that the internists there could devote their energies and expertise to the care of patients who had contracted COVID-19. As a result, many surgical procedures for thyroid

cancer have been postponed, along with biopsies of suspicious nodules and radioiodine therapy, and diabetes and other endocrine or metabolic disorders are being managed without the regular follow-up visits previously considered essential. How are our patients coping with these changes? Has the fear of hospital-related contagion affected their decisions regarding treatment? And what technological resources do we have at our disposal that can provide patients with effective ongoing guidance and support while “social distancing” is still essential? We eagerly await your contributions on these pressing issues.

The light at the end of this tunnel is little more than a glimmer, but it’s already time to begin thinking about how to reestablish contact with our endocrine and diabetic patients, to restore the relationships that have been disrupted by this “perfect storm.” Our community has both the strength and experience to act promptly and find innovative, effective solutions for overcoming the challenges of this phase. The strength of our community is rooted in research, and to highlight the importance of these roots, the current issue of *Endocrine* contains selected manuscripts from talks given at the Festschrift recently held to honor Professor Marian Ludgate and her colleagues at the University of Cardiff. The papers exemplify Marian’s intellectual curiosity, her inspired problem solving skills, and her commitment to advancing our understanding of and ability to effectively treat thyroid disease. We are proud to acknowledge and celebrate Marian’s outstanding contributions to the field of thyroid disease and the work she has done to support and promote the Cardiff Thyroid Research Group. This elite group, one of the U.K.’s oldest centers of tradition and excellence, includes other prestigious figures such as Reginald Hall and John Lazarus, and its major contributions to science go far beyond the UK, reaching all corners of international scientific community.

So, in closing then, let me say: Many thanks, Marian! May your career serve as an example of the talent, the strength, and the commitment we will need to meet the many and varied challenges of this perfect storm and resolve them as quickly and effectively as possible.

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