

Editorial

Dark present, but look to the future

We have had COVID-19 around us, an experience as dark as the Corvidae, the mostly black crow and raven family. But amongst the Corvidae are the much less frequent, but striking, pale blue and turquoise jays, showing that there is often brightness and hope if you know where to look for it.

In the first paper of this issue, Foad Alzoughool and Lo'ai Alanagreh review a potentially very valuable idea - passive immunization as a treatment for COVID-19. It is a very interesting proposition, given the variability we are currently finding in antibody response to COVID-19, and considering that we probably have a good pool of fit young donors in most countries.

This epidemic has been more darkness than light, many have been desperately ill and some have died. No continent has been spared, neither the illness nor the economic and social breakdown it caused. But now is the time to see if there can be glimpses of light as we move to the recovery time.

This Journal is about evaluating benefits and harm – and considering always how to get better outcomes. Much has been said about ‘pulling together’. Hardship and sorrow are good for initiating that, but we must make sure comradeship both lasts and grows.

And there it is, that word ‘grow’. The world’s population has shrunk fractionally by COVID with much accompanying sadness, loneliness, social disruption and economic chaos. There seems little doubt that living in the more populous major cities like New York and London, where people live closely together, as well as the crowded travel to and from these places has played a role in the transmission of the disease and resulting deaths, as it has happened in every epidemic.

We have seen in the recent past that our flood control, fire control, and earthquake control emergency services are all struggling in various countries; COVID has shown that many companies and financial operations have not been able to manage because they live hand-to-mouth. It should not have come as a surprise to anyone that many health care systems cannot operate optimally to provide care for all, even to manage the seasonal variations in national health, such as influenza and malaria outbreaks. Pursuing globalization and growth, we rely on energy guzzling and disease transmitting logistics, which in turn rely on more growth: the benefits of this growth are strongest for the already privileged, the very few who waste energy on unnecessary travel and wasteful consumption, while the harms of these unsustainable practices are born particularly by those who are already vulnerable.

What we need is a growth of *ideas* (like using passive immunity) and enough public infrastructure for all of us to be safe, healthy and self-fulfilled. Those of us who have achieved this desirable status should be thinking of the pleasure to be gained from everyone having the feeling that I [I. Ralph Edwards] had when I was young – that improvement towards what I desired was a realistic prospect. Professor Terry Eagleton, in his book ‘The Meaning of Life,’ [1] concluded that personal happiness, the free flourishing of all our faculties was one part of the meaning of life, but he was adamant that without the second part, love, and the compassion, justice and empathy to allow others to be fulfilled, your own true happiness is not possible.

We should not need to hear, from a young world citizen, the words, ‘How dare you’. How dare we just utilize the services and comforts we enjoy (and which give us obesity, addictions, and loss of humanity!),

and not care. 'Noblesse oblige' are two words to remember. With privilege comes responsibility. We should all aim to create loving societies through our individual actions. Virgil said, 'Love conquers all things; we too shall yield to love.'

Most readers of this will have some interest in health care and other essential services, particularly education. Let's WORK GLOBALLY to make available, for everybody, these essential items of life; and later hope that the rest of the world's problems will be tackled similarly.

Finally, we think a major development in the approach to politics would be to drop all divisive views whether they be religious or party political. How stupid is it to divide the workings of complex societies into 'Right' or 'Left' wing?

We are aware that many will think this is just visionary with no substance, but we believe many others do understand that behaviour must change, and that no world problems can be realistically tackled without curbing human greed, selfishness and proliferation.

Not too much to ask after a global catastrophe? 'Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore" [2].'

I. Ralph Edwards and Marie Lindquist

References

- [1] Eagleton T, *The meaning of life: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2008.
- [2] Poe EA, *The raven*. Available from: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48860/the-raven>.