COVID-19

C Niek Van Dijk

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a dramatic impact on all of us, involving all our daily activities and our practices. As I write this editorial, elective orthopaedic and sports medicine care has virtually come to a standstill. Many conferences have been cancelled or postponed. I hope that all is well with you, your families and colleagues during these challenging and unprecedented times. I can appreciate how difficult it must be within your institutions and know that many of you are on the front lines supporting patients and fellow clinicians. I hope you all are safe as you adjust to the changes this pandemic has brought to your work and family life.

We understand that reviewers may have longer hours and extra responsibilities, which must come before the Journal of ISAKOS. For that reason, we are even more grateful for your efforts and appreciate those who continue to complete their assignments. Likewise, we recognise that authors may need more time revising manuscripts and we will do our utmost to support you.

It was Bill Gates who wrote in 2015: ‘we must prepare for future epidemics, which may spread more effectively than Ebola. There is a significant chance that an epidemic of a substantially more infectious disease, will occur sometime in the next 20 years’ Global health experts have been warning for years that another pandemic whose speed and severity would rival that discovery occurred at a later date, but he did propose the practice of washing hands with chlorinated lime solutions (bleach). Washing your hands with bleach is painful and it was resisted by the other doctors. Besides they had their own explanations for puerperal fever. Semmelweis was fired for ‘progressive political sympathies’. He moved to another hospital and within a year, his washing hands policy had reduced their infection rate to 1%, while it was 31% in his old hospital that same year. He published his results, but his findings conflicted with the established scientific and medical opinions of the time and his ideas were rejected by the medical community. Semmelweis was neglected by his colleagues. It annoyed them and tensions mounted. He accused his colleagues of murder and began stopping couples on the street to warn them about the university hospital and saying it was safer to give birth at home. He was eventually arrested and ended up in a madhouse, where he died a few weeks later. Semmelweis spoke up because his eyes were telling him something other than old theories was the cause of infection. He had the courage to challenge his colleagues who fearfully clung to their old paradigms. He was expelled from the physician community for standing up for his patients just like Dr Li Wenliang was silenced in Wuhan.

Since Semmelweis, we know the importance of washing our hands. In most hospitals today, we have alcohol dispensers in each ward to be used after and before each patient contact. COVID-19 has raised awareness of this basic principle to the general population. It induced a quick but crucial education. Semmelweis was neglected by his colleagues who fearfully clung to their old paradigms. He was expelled from the physician community for standing up for his patients just like Dr Li Wenliang was silenced in Wuhan.

Semmelweis knew nothing about bacterial infections because that discovery occurred at a later date, but he did propose the practice of washing hands with chlorinated lime solutions (bleach). Washing your hands with bleach is painful and it was resisted by the other doctors. Besides they had their own explanations for puerperal fever. Semmelweis was fired for ‘progressive political sympathies’. He moved to another hospital and within a year, his washing hands policy had reduced their infection rate to 1%, while it was 31% in his old hospital that same year. He published his results, but his findings conflicted with the established scientific and medical opinions of the time and his ideas were rejected by the medical community. Semmelweis was neglected by his colleagues. It annoyed them and tensions mounted. He accused his colleagues of murder and began stopping couples on the street to warn them about the university hospital and saying it was safer to give birth at home. He was eventually arrested and ended up in a madhouse, where he died a few weeks later. Semmelweis spoke up because his eyes were telling him something other than old theories was the cause of infection. He had the courage to challenge his colleagues who fearfully clung to their old paradigms. He was expelled from the physician community for standing up for his patients just like Dr Li Wenliang was silenced in Wuhan.

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