

'Rather, ten times, die in the surf, heralding the way to a new world, than stand idly on the shore': saying goodbye to 2020

In the first issue of the year, Sharon King reflects upon an unforgettable year and its silver linings, as a reminder to be hopeful as vaccines begin to be rolled out across the UK



After Pfizer and AstraZeneca both delivered on producing a vaccine, UK vaccinations began in December 2020

Writing the first BACN column of a new year for the *Journal of Aesthetic Nursing* has given me an opportunity to look back at the past year, and to reflect on what has happened during 2020. Usually, I would include a review of new treatments, conferences attended, journals read and continuing professional development (CPD) updates.

However, 2020 has been a year like no other, as it saw the emergence of a novel virus that blindsided the whole world, crept up on everyone while people were enjoying

the festivities of the 2019 Christmas holiday period and then started a reign of terror in 2020. The world watched in horror as healthcare professionals in Wuhan battled the virus and struggled to treat those affected.

The pandemic began back in December 2019, when the Chinese Wuhan Municipal Health Commission reported a cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause, and it was thought to be linked to the wet market in Wuhan. The market was subsequently closed for environmental sanitisation and disinfection, and, on

23 January 2020, Wuhan City went into lockdown (BBC News, 2020). All travel in and out of Wuhan was prohibited, and movement around the city was restricted. Little did anyone know or understand



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about the magnitude of the task ahead. The same week, the International Master Course on Aging Science (IMCAS) World Congress went ahead in Paris and, apart from the occasional person wearing a face mask, everything looked relatively normal. However, I and other colleagues who were present did start to feel somewhat uneasy, as the first European case was reported from France on 24 January 2020 (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, 2020). Within a few days, Germany reported its first case: a person who had travelled there from China, and the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus a 'public health emergency of international concern' (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, 2020).

Reflecting on 2020

While 2020 will be remembered for a considerable amount of negative reasons, it has to be said that there has also been a lot of good throughout the year.

Rather than dwelling on what was and is wrong, I would like to focus on what is right, and while it is difficult to be upbeat, there have been many positives. At the time of writing, the British Association of Cosmetic Nurses (BACN) has 925 members, many of whom joined forces with other professionals and, along with nurses, doctors and other healthcare professionals who had retired, returned to help colleagues working in the NHS. They stepped up, and, in the words of Florence Nightingale: 'rather, ten times, die in the surf, heralding the way to a new world, than stand idly on the shore'. Many offered their services in expectation that the Nightingale hospitals would face a deluge of patients. In December 2019, NHS England sent a letter to trusts asking them to plan for the use of additional facilities, such as the Nightingale hospitals. On 3 April 2020, the ExCeL Centre was opened, having been transformed into a 4000-bed hospital ready to treat COVID-19 patients. However, it was put on standby in May, having only accepted 20 patients (BBC News, 2021).

By the first week of February 2020, the public health authorities in the EU/EEA countries were being encouraged to plan sufficient personal protective

equipment (PPE) supplies for their health professionals, and to ensure surge capacity. Many donated their own supplies of PPE, while others started to sew, making scrubs and face masks.

On 11 February 2020, the virus was officially named SARS-CoV-2. Viruses are named based on their genetic structure to facilitate the development of diagnostic tests, vaccines and medicines by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV). Diseases are named to enable discussion on the

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prevention and spread of the disease and to find treatments. The WHO has the responsibility of officially naming a disease in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), and so, also on 11 February 2020, COVID-19 was the name chosen for the disease, which had, until then, been referred to as the '2019 novel coronavirus'.

Silver linings

With necessity being the mother of invention, the BACN continued to support its members throughout the lockdown period and, like many, adapted to working virtually, writing guidance and planning for when it could eventually return to practice. It was, and continues to be, an extraordinary way of working. With

the uncertainty that things may be very different for quite some time, it has given many the opportunity to evaluate how they work, as well as providing the BACN with the chance to update its CPD offering and take on challenges and projects that may not have been possible before or that it may not have had the time to commit to. There may not have been a BACN conference in 2020, but the regional meetings continued, largely thanks to the creativity of the BACN admin team and the commitment of our regional leaders, and we extend thanks to them all for their hard work. While there may not be a physical conference in 2021, there will be a virtual conference, and the digital programme started again in January 2021.

Looking to the future

In April 2020, clinical trials started for the so-called 'Oxford vaccine': a joint project between multinational pharmaceutical firm, AstraZeneca, and Oxford University. The race was on to get an effective vaccine, and Pfizer and AstraZeneca have both delivered on producing a vaccine. There is a glimmer of hope that the tide is beginning to turn against COVID-19, but our intensive therapy unit (ITU) departments and hospitals have exceeded capacity, and major incidents have been declared at several trusts. Once again, nurses, doctors, dentists and many other healthcare workers have signed up to the NHS vaccination programme or volunteered through charitable organisations. There will be other vaccines, including the Moderna vaccine, rolled out in the first quarter, and, with this, comes the hope that we should be able to return to our friends, clinics and patients in the very near future. ◀ JAN

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