



# The Galle Medical Journal

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## Editorial

### All humanity in peril .....

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As we publish this issue of the *Galle Medical Journal*, all humanity is facing a global pandemic of unprecedented magnitude: COVID-19 caused by the RNA virus, SARS-CoV-2. It is a major health threat which has affected all inhabitants of our planet transcending boundaries. The disease status worldwide is in a state of rapid and dynamic flux. According to Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), "It took 67 days from the first reported case to reach the first 100,000 cases, 11 days for the second 100,000 cases; just four days for the third 100,000 cases and a mere two days for the fourth hundred thousand."<sup>i</sup> Countries with well-developed health systems are fighting a formidable battle against COVID-19. The morbidity of the healthcare workers too is significant. The presentation varies from asymptomatic disease to a fatal pneumonia.

The COVID-19 pandemic calls for broad-based diagnosis with wide spread testing; expansion of care services with adequate facilities for respiratory support; research for effective medications and a vaccine. Numerous drug trials are in progress with antiviral agents and other agents. However, curative medication and vaccines need to be **fast-tracked**. Considering the current exigency, we wonder whether laid down guidance can be overridden?

The pandemic has given an impetus to new improvisations and inventions too; for *e.g.* the rapid manufacture of ventilators. Improvised continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) devices have been used and are being devised to bridge the gap between the oxygen mask and full ventilation.<sup>ii</sup>

Public health services are globally active in tracing contacts and in the preventive measures. We in Sri Lanka too are currently in a state of lock down with strong advice on social distancing with curfews and suspension

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of international arrivals. These measures call for a high level of social responsibility with behavioural adjustments.

Adversity of this pandemic transcends mere health-related aspects with effects on family, and broader social, behavioural, political and economic ramifications. Human behaviour has changed with social distancing, quarantine and isolation. Economies worldwide are in a state of recession with loss of jobs and reduced incomes. It is very likely that this will cause a high incidence of mental disorders due to a multitude of causes. It is certain that this pandemic will have a profound effect on the social behaviour of *Homo sapiens* into the future.

This issue of the *GMJ* features two leading articles looking at different aspects of the global pandemic of COVID-19. Gunasena focuses on features of this pathogen, transmission, period of infectivity, clinical manifestations, and minimization of adverse effects. We need to recognize the high level of infectivity of the virus before the disease manifests out clinically. Fernando traces events from its origin to the current situation. He calls for a **reality check**. He is of the view that values of power and growth have gone into oblivion and he calls for introspection and reflection on real values of life. This in turn is likely to cause a behavioural modification.

It needs to be emphasized that figures related COVID-19 given herein will be different by the time you read this issue as the disease incidence and mortality are rapidly changing. The national and global picture into the next few months is so very unpredictable at this juncture. We fervently hope that all humanity globally will escape the scourge of SARS-CoV-2 soon. Please stay safe.

**Satish K Goonesinghe**

**Eisha I Waidyarathne**

*Editors in Chief/GMJ*

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i <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-remarks-at-the-g20-extraordinary-leaders-summit-on-covid-19---26-march-2020> [Accessed 30 March 2020]

ii <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/30/f1-team-helps-build-new-uk-breathing-aid-for-covid-19-patients> [Accessed 30 March 2020]