



Guest Editorial

COVID-19 Infection

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COVID-19 infection caused by SARS-CoV-2 virus has emerged as the public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC). This unmitigated pandemic had impacted particularly upon the personal and professional lives of healthcare providers in unprecedented ways by posing unique healthcare challenges; not overlooking its heavy consequences for the humanity at large. The immediate responses have been varied by different countries and regions ranging from complete to smart lockdown, travel restrictions to border closures and reliance on herd immunity as well as a growing drive and demand for development of vaccines, to help contain its spread; enlisting but a few!

Pakistani health professionals at home and abroad, also joined hands together in this venture, sharing their expertise to help form a consensus on some salient issues and health-care challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. This special COVID issue of the *Annals* is based on a webinar that was held on the 6th of August, 2020 with joint collaboration of the KEMCA UK, KEMCANNA and King Edward Medical University. More than 500 participants from over ten countries attended this meeting, co-chaired by Dr Muhammad Tufail, Chairman of the KEMCA UK and Prof. Khalid Masood Gondal, the Vice Chancellor of KEMU. It can be regarded as a success where eminent speakers across the globe contributed towards clarifying some important aspects of COVID-19 pandemic with their novel, comprehensive, and thought-provoking presentations. The Pow-

er Point presentations and video recordings are also available for browsing on the KEMCA UK YouTube channel as well as the KEMU website.

As a guest editor, I feel honoured and obliged to the KEMCA UK, KEMCANNA and KEMU for helping us realise this event in our endeavours towards the education of healthcare professionals at home and thereby improving the healthcare. I would also like to appreciate the efforts of Prof. Saira Afzal and Dr. Athar Saeed in publication of this special issue. The co-authorship of these articles by medical students at KEMU supervised by the participant consultants is very promising indeed and holds testament to the positive values and aspirations of our Kemcolian fraternity.

Dr Faisal Sultan, Consultant Infectious Diseases and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Health provides a detailed account of the particular challenges faced by Pakistan regarding the diagnostic, preventive and management services for this pandemic, as well as the peculiar risks posed for the healthcare providers. His overview of the strategic steps taken by the policy makers towards containing and controlling its spread is reassuring as well as heartening.

The clinical management of hospitalised COVID-19 patients harbours upon clinical algorithms for early recognition of COVID-related ARDS (C-ARDS). Dr. Asim Siddique, Assistant Professor of Medicine-Pulmonary Critical Care at the Baylor College of

Medicine, Texas, USA elaborates upon the pathophysiology of COVID-pneumonia and gives a detailed account of different modes of non-invasive and invasive methods of ventilation. He emphasizes the importance of avoiding early intubation with a comprehensive review for escalation of oxygen therapy, benefits of awake proning as well as selective and effective use of ECMO used at his institution.

My article highlights the ‘Uncommon Extrapulmonary presentations of COVID-19’ which can be overlooked amid the panic and stress of managing COVID-19 pneumonia. As the disease has evolved, its complexity and propensity for multisystemic involvement has been uncovered with multiple case reports and series published across the globe.

Ignoring life limiting non-COVID-19 conditions particularly cancer for too long may turn one public health crisis into many others and should be avoided. Dr. Muhammad Tufail’s article, from the Lung Cancer services in Leicester, UK discusses the importance as well as peculiar challenges of ensuring provision of timely cancer services during this pandemic with particular emphasis on lung cancer. The genuine concern for increased mortality in oncology patients on treatment is duly touched upon.

The psychological effects of a pandemic are an equally important and often unrecognised facet of healthcare that can adversely affect the clinical outcome of these patients. Prof. Afzal Javed, Consultant Psychiatrist from University of Warwick UK gives a detailed review of the available research regarding the emotional and psychological impacts of COVID-19

on people of different age groups.

COVID-19 pandemic has also adversely affected research. With the burgeoning increase in COVID-related publications, the dangerous aspects of ineffective methodology, greed for publication and irresponsible editorial board review of even some famous journals has come to light. Prof. Umar Sadat, Hunterian Professor from Cambridge University UK describes how research has evolved during COVID-19 and raises his concerns about its effects on non-COVID research funding as well as the inadequate quality of COVID-related research published so far.

It is our profound hope that this special COVID issue of the *Annals* will prove to be an important step towards devising a clear, comprehensive and patient-centred management strategy at home. Furthermore, this special issue will give some insight into how we have coped so far with this pandemic, and help us ‘*translate its stubbornness*’* into improving our healthcare services by efficient and effective use of our limited healthcare services. Additionally the importance of public health strategies and primary prevention cannot be overemphasised. We hope that you all remain safe, healthy, stronger and united. Best wishes to you, your families, community and patients during these challenging and trying times.

*Lord Amiens’ reply to Duke Senior: I would not change it. Happy is your Grace,
That can *translate the stubbornness* of fortune
Into so quiet and so sweet a style.
Shakespeare: *As You Like It* (Act 2, Sc. 1)