

## **What Have We Learned From the Covid-19 Pandemic so Far?**

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Dear Sir,

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has been tragic. However it has provided us with some interesting insights and questions worth answering.

To begin with; the number of patients on trollies nationally dropped from more than 600 on the first week of March to less than 60 in the middle of the month. This is a drop of nearly 88% in less than two weeks. Obviously this is because of the reduced Emergency Departments attendance, as people were warned of the outbreak. The question of what is the cause of this significant drop, is an important one to answer. Bear in mind that this drop occurred before elective procedures were cancelled.

Secondly; many hospitals cancelled outpatient clinics and started virtual clinics. Such significant changes would not occur in such a short time frame unless in very exceptional circumstances.

Thirdly; this pandemic has established a proper hand washing culture in the community. It has been driven by the awareness and also fear generated mainly by the mass media. In normal circumstances it would have taken a lot of effort, time and money to campaign to reach the current level of community awareness about hygienic practices.

Fourthly; recognition of the value of health workers' efforts is another positive point. When the majority of people stopped going to work and began working from home; essential healthcare staff had to continue. The current pandemic has highlighted the important role that health workers play in society. The HSE has now lifted the embargo on recruitment and is filling posts which have been long awaited. Team working and resource re-deployment locally and nationally has proven to be hugely beneficial.

The rapid response from the medical, research, diagnostic and pharmaceutical organisations/ industries has been commendable. Within a few days we saw an influx of data and information being made available and everyday there have been new developments. From the use of Angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs) and Angiotensin converting Enzyme (ACE2) in patients with COVID-19<sup>1</sup>, to the potential benefits of Hydroxychloroquine<sup>2</sup> and other drugs for treatment. To our knowledge there are now more than eight drug companies working on developing a vaccine.

The Carbon monoxide emission is at its lowest in most of the World cities. We are confident that there will be more lessons to come as time passes and we believe that the world will never be the same as it was pre-Covid-19 era.

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