

Hindsight

As Spring arrives and the days get longer, a feeling of hope brings a promise of more normal times ahead. A year ago some of us were in denial of the magnitude of what was to come. If we had known that it would truly take at least 12 months to ride this storm, would we have done things differently? Maybe. Hindsight, after all, is 20/20.

When reflecting on what we learned from the trials of this past year, a few key words come to mind, including, technology, collaboration and connections. Technology has given us the option of working remotely, even if that might mean never getting away from work. Many of us have expertly mastered how to share our screens on video conferences and enhanced our images with virtual backgrounds to obscure where we are or to suggest where we would rather be. We can access our desktop files with a click of a button from our dining room table while dressed in a new definition for casual attire.

Collaboration gave us the opportunity to gather together virtually for international scientific discussions that were open to all with an internet connection and often gratis, which was unthinkable pre-COVID.

There is a new found appreciation for how connected we are to those outside of our immediate family and close friends. It is tragic to think of the lives lost this past year; lives that will never be forgotten by their loved ones, friends and colleagues. Now more than ever there is a need to acknowledge that we care about each other. Connections using technology filled a void, but it can't replace traveling to another city to gather in person and actually see how well we are doing.

Foresight

What we have learned from our battles with COVID virus is that our challenges are universal. Spring, warmer weather and accompanying spring showers, which in some cases have created devastating floods, not only bring us flowers but also screening concerns for mosquito borne virus, tick bite diseases and other vector carrying potentially transmittable challenges.

Our challenges may have geographic "hot spots" but they may quickly and quietly spread across all borders. There may be concerns like Malaria or Chagas which are prevalent in some areas more than others but may be moving into populations without known connection to endemic areas. While our battle with COVID continues, will we again see West Nile emerge? Whatever the screening requirements may be we have learned from our experiences that we are definitely stronger together than alone. Our ability to reach out to share tissue and information about the medical concerns in our environment assists us in continuing to meet the needs for transplantable ocular tissue. While many struggle to contain and hopefully defeat or eradicate these infectious agents we must remain vigilant in our screening and testing to ensure the safest tissue for ocular transplantation.

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