

Many lessons have been learnt from this pandemic; we have a significant understanding of the virus, its mode of infection, the immune response it elicits and the measures necessary to control it. But perhaps the most potent lessons we have learnt are about the real importance of the people so often overlooked by society.

The NHS is much beloved by the British public, and never more so than at this time. The news has been filled with images of exhausted staff and of those who have tragically lost their lives to the disease whilst simply doing their job. From our professional perspective, the importance of science and scientists has been brought home sharply to the general public – no longer the geeks in white coats, but the saviours of our society as mass testing services are established while vaccine research and production has swung into action. But I think this pandemic has also made us re-evaluate what “front line” and “essential services” really mean.

Like healthcare workers, teachers hold a measure of respect for the often challenging work they do and, like us, they have carried on working during the pandemic. But how often have our bus drivers, supermarket workers, service engineers and members of the clergy been regarded as providers of an essential service? Perhaps familiarity breeds contempt and we simply do not notice those whose role it is to enable us to go

EVERYDAY PEOPLE



Sarah May, Deputy Chief Executive of the IBMS, thanks the usually overlooked workers who have kept us safe in the pandemic.

about our everyday lives safely, quickly and easily. Perhaps it is because they do their job so well that we only notice them when they are not there to provide their services to us.

It is not the big, powerful people but the everyday people, who are usually overlooked, that have been keeping us safe, fed, and able to travel when required. I would like to think that after life has returned to normal we will not forget these people who carried on working when many were staying safely at home. Nurses may be angels, but the staff of my local supermarket are heroes, along with my post lady, who is there every day, irrespective of the weather, and who is one of those people that unites a local community.

In the past year I have spoken with more neighbours than I have in the past

twenty, largely because I have been based at home, but also because, when I do emerge, I am accompanied by a somewhat unusual looking dog (no, he’s not half hyaena). Yes, I think we do see and value things, and people, differently.

One thing is certain though – whatever the prism through which we view our workforces, I think it unlikely we will in the future be standing on our doorsteps clapping for bank managers and stockbrokers.

Sarah May
Deputy Chief Executive



Institute of Biomedical Science is the professional body for the biomedical science profession.

INSTITUTE OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE
12 Coldbath Square
London, EC1R 5HL
United Kingdom
+44 (0)20 7713 0214
+44 (0)20 7837 9658
Email: mail@ibms.org
Web: www.ibms.org

PRESIDENT
Allan Wilson CSci FIBMS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
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HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS
Dan Nimmo

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
education@ibms.org

EXAMINATIONS
examinations@ibms.org

MEMBERSHIP
mc@ibms.org

CHARTERED SCIENTIST
chartered@ibms.org

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