

At last, there is something to celebrate – the COVID-19 vaccination programme has started and there is hope that life will gradually begin to return to normal after the disaster that was 2020.

However, I don't think we can ever go back to exactly the way we were pre-pandemic, as something so profoundly disruptive of our social, financial and emotional wellbeing cannot diminish or disappear without leaving some scars. Those of us in healthcare are probably the lucky ones, if anyone can be considered lucky in a pandemic, in that we are still in employment. Not so for the thousands of people in hospitality and the myriad of other employment groups for whom 2021 probably offers more hardship than hope. From the biomedical scientist perspective though, I would even go so far as saying that there may even be the danger of achieving the coveted title of "NHS heroes".

COVID-19 is one of those disruptive forces that has made us look at doing things differently and has brought accelerated change. The biomedical science workforce is finally recognised as a key element of delivering diagnostic services, and we are viewed as vital in the success of the planned mega labs. The experience of the early days of the Lighthouse Labs has proved that a high-quality service cannot be delivered without high-quality staff. While a significant proportion of the COVID-19 testing work can be done by trained, unregistered staff, the quality,

EMERGING FROM THE RUBBLE



Sarah May, Deputy Chief Executive of the IBMS, says the profession is finally recognised as a key element of delivering diagnostic services.

management and leadership roles require experienced registered scientists. I would even go so far as to say that we may see an increasing interest in our profession in the community setting, something that has been mooted for years but now may become a reality. There has recently been a public consultation on a proposal to include biomedical scientists in a patient group direction, which would enable named and trained individuals to supply and administer prescribed drugs. This is an expansion to our role that has been under consideration for some time but I am certain that the need for large numbers of staff to administer the COVID-19 vaccinations has helped to focus minds. I hope I'm not being naively optimistic, but something good has to

emerge from the rubble of 2020.

I think the effect of the lockdowns and the restrictions to our lives and liberties has also made many of us re-evaluate what we want from our work-life balance. My personal act of self-fulfilment was to become the ridiculously proud owner of a dog. So much for taking control though; rather than something small and non-shedding, he is growing daily in size, is set for serious fur and the exercise need of an Olympic athlete. 2021 could be interesting.

Sarah May
Deputy Chief Executive



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