

**W**e're living in extraordinary times, with every news channel and conversation dominated by the coronavirus pandemic. I've ground my teeth in frustration every time I see or hear that the testing is being performed by doctors and that all the spare laboratory space should be used to increase testing rates, but this week something has happened and my heart has soared.

During the lockdown the Institute's Council, staff and scientific advisors have been working flat out to respond to news items, correct misinformation and to provide good clear scientific explanation about COVID-19 diagnosis and the scientists who provide those diagnostic services. At last we have been recognised as the voice of a vital profession and our opinion and advice has been sought – our President, Allan Wilson, has been interviewed on both television and radio, giving clear professional advice and opinion (see p.43 for more information). It is a great pity that it has taken such an event as a pandemic to bring us to the fore, but it is our good fortune that we have Allan at the helm, as he has garnered much attention and respect both personally and for our profession.

A very different outcome of the coronavirus lockdown has been the realisation that homeworking, when enforced rather than an option, is not the luxury it might have once seemed. Our

# RESPECT FOR THE PROFESSION



Deputy Chief Executive of the IBMS **Sarah May** feels both joy and despair at recent reactions to COVID-19.

office in central London is closed and all staff are now working remotely. I appreciate that this is not an option open to many of our members, who are travelling in to work in hospital laboratories each day, but I miss my colleagues and realise that all the technology in the world is no substitute for a good face-to-face conversation. I am writing this as the Easter weekend begins and know that for everyone who isn't covering a shift in the laboratory, there will be no meeting up with family and friends. This is a difficult and stressful time on many levels; we all too aware of the risks for some people of contracting the virus but for many the social and emotional trauma will be almost as difficult. I despair at some of the ghastly scaremongering "messages from a friend" that keep crawling around social media

with dire warnings of social collapse and lonely deaths. This is not helpful at a time when anxiety levels are already heightened.

This brings me back to the approach taken by the Institute to this unprecedented health crisis; the constant stream of good, encouraging, sensible communications that are coming from our organisation says much about our profession – a profession to which I am proud to belong. I'd like to finish with a personal thanks to all our members in pathology for all you are doing, it does not go unnoticed and is very much appreciated.

**Sarah May**  
Deputy Chief Executive



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