

THE BIG QUESTION

THIS MONTH WE ASK

“How do you think public approaches to health and wellbeing will change when the current pandemic is over?”



Sue Alexander

Pathology Services Manager
The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust

I would like to think that there will be a far greater awareness among the British people that pandemics and disasters do not happen far away, or mostly to other people, like the 2004 tsunami, the Ebola outbreaks and the Fukushima 2011 nuclear power plant disaster.

This current pandemic has woken people up to the fact that wealthy, industrialised nations with modern healthcare systems can be at the mercy of an infection and that these healthcare systems can themselves become overwhelmed. I'd also like to think that the impact of the spread of the infection and the escalating approaches by government towards measures designed to limit this will remain in people's minds for a long time to come.

I hope that everyone will become more aware of the need for continued good hygiene, respectful of each other's personal space, understand the issues that the NHS is up against and perhaps remember that biomedical scientists are key workers in the testing processes.

The impact of the infection should leave a serious impression on the psyche of the nation, making us aware of the freedoms we always took for granted and encourage the government to rethink how the NHS is funded.

There is clearly a big public “thank you” for NHS workers and all the other key workers and it should be the case that people now understand that their behaviour can affect public health issues and contribute to maintaining a more healthy society going forwards.

IMAGE: IKON



Colin Mudd

Higher Specialist Biomedical Scientist
Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust

The current situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic has certainly focused the public's opinion on healthcare matters.

The contribution to the wellbeing and health of the nation by the NHS has been widely appreciated.

Finally, the magnificent machinery of the NHS, with the myriad parts that make up the whole, is at the forefront of everyone's minds and people now realise what is needed to make it work effectively. All the NHS workers, frontline clinical and nursing staff, support services and laboratory staff have had significant parts to play.

A great hope is that the public will realise their contribution to the health of the nation from following government recommendations – they can positively contribute to disease control sometimes by simply doing nothing, by staying at home.

I wonder once the pandemic is over if the public will become complacent, or will have learnt a significant lesson from the death toll and the changes that have occurred to all of our lives in bringing the pandemic under control.

Now is not the time for a business-as-usual, stiff-upper-lip attitude, but rather a time for recollection, reflection and re-evaluation of all that we hold dear.

To borrow from past world-changing events... perhaps our watchwords might be “lest we forget”. People have died so that we might live. That sounds melodramatic – perhaps trite – but is absolutely the case. We must all learn and improve from this dreadful pandemic.



Simon Parker

Clinical Market Manager
Roche Diagnostics Limited

Life will never be the same again.

We face a major hangover after this pandemic – family tragedy, jobs lost and the country on its knees. But, strangely, I sense new shoots of hope for humanity and a fresh bewildering sense of purpose. Friendship is a powerful antidote and within both my organisation and neighbourhood, I have been amazed just how many people I didn't know before, that I now know on various mobile apps.

My company has been adapting to future ways of working, but no one prepared us for sudden isolation. On our own we may be, but online we are many and together we are strong.

This is how I see the future. Adapting to home working with digital technology, saving the environment and saving one of the most precious things – time.

COVID-19 has certainly put diagnostics on the map and I hope we will see a drive towards prevention and the value of public health over cure.

So, what else? A renewed focus on walking and fresh air, for mental health and wellbeing. My family has started baking and enjoying the challenge of just one shop every two weeks. Being at home has also meant us coming together more.

Let's touch on the negatives – we will always be looking over our shoulders for the next outbreak; it's not going away but, like many life lessons, next time we will be more prepared and will lose less lives.

We talked as a family about this question and I hope these few words reflect on their views as much as mine. I know many of my colleagues would also agree.