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JANUARY

NEWSLETTER



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COVID-19 AND THE SECOND WAVE

Jennifer Brooks

In the spring of 2020, when millions of us went into lockdown, we were all looking forward to the future. We were sat at home just waiting for the day when we could go out and see our friends and family again, face to face, rather than on a Zoom call. Nonetheless, now, more than 6 months later, many of us have been able to do so, even if we still have to wear face coverings, and maintain social distancing. This being said, the fight is far from over, and many countries are finding that COVID-19 cases are increasing at an exponentially fast rate.

Nonetheless, according to an article by the British Heart Foundation, just because cases are rising, this doesn't necessarily mean the second wave will be more severe than the first. They also note that in the UK, although there are a record number of new COVID-19 cases, the NHS is now carrying out more tests than they were able to do in March. As a result, the increase in new cases is largely due to this. This being said, this doesn't necessarily mean that the virus itself is any less dangerous. 1,410 have still been admitted to hospital with the disease between November 27 and December 2. This is in addition to the 15,616 who were already in hospital, and more than 1,400 of these patients are on ventilators.

According to a BBC News article, by Mike Hills, in the US, cases have also been quietly increasing, and the country now have a staggering 11 million confirmed cases, which is the highest worldwide. Similarly to the UK, it is thought that the current surge in infection rates is partly due to increased testing. Nonetheless, the cold weather has also been thought to have contributed to it; people are spending more time indoors, where the ventilation is poor, and it is much harder to practice social distancing.

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Nevertheless, to combat the increase in cases, many countries are taking different approaches. The director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Dr Fauci, is encouraging US citizens to "double down" on measures such as social distancing, and washing hands. Nonetheless, according to a Guardian article, by Emma Graham-Harrison, countries like China and New Zealand have introduced strict travel bans. Others, like Germany and South Korea, were amongst the first to implement extensive large testing and tracing systems, so they can easily identify where the disease is spreading. However, it is very difficult to know which approach is best, especially because some countries, such as the Czech Republic and Hungary, who had initial success, are now struggling. As a result, it is hard to predict how the disease will progress in any country, no matter what approach they are taking.

Nonetheless, there has also been a lot of positive news about vaccines recently, and they have already begun to be distributed in the UK. Therefore, the future is already looking much more hopeful, as finally the end is in sight. This being said, it is important to note that we are not at the end yet. Thus, the most important thing that we can do is to continue to socially distance, wash our hands, and follow any guidelines that our countries have in place. It might seem arduous, especially after everything we have already been through, but it won't be forever. Let's just take each day as it comes.



Covid-19 and Student Wellbeing

Abheek Singh



The last few months have been hard for everyone, especially due to the pandemic. The last time we were able to enjoy life, with no restrictions, was back in March, and obviously, since then, our lives have changed a lot. The Coronavirus situation has been hard for everyone, nonetheless, it has been particularly harmful to the wellbeing of many university students. Not only are many struggling to adjust to online learning, those who are living away from home are desperately missing their families. As a result, according to an article by Inside Higher Ed, there has been an alarmingly high rate of student mental health problems, that have arisen during the pandemic. However, if you are a student, there are always steps to take to make your situation seem a little bit better. Keep reading to find out more.

The first thing you can do to stay well during the pandemic, is to make sure you keep talking to your loved ones. Granted, if you're a student this might be a little bit difficult at the moment, especially if you are living away in a dorm, miles away from your family and friends. But that doesn't mean you can't talk on the phone, or have a zoom call with them. It may not be the same, but just talking to a familiar voice about any worries you have can feel like a weight has been lifted.

The stress that the situation is causing, coupled with the stress of deadlines, can also cause physical symptoms, leaving you feeling lethargic and burnt out. As a result, it is very easy to want to do nothing but eat junk, and stay up late watching Netflix. Nonetheless, it is imperative to make sure you are taking care of your body, even if you feel like you don't have time. You can do this by being sure to take at least 20 minutes a day to switch off, and to meditate, which you can do by finding mindfulness videos on YouTube. Other efforts to help take care of your body include exercising regularly, getting plenty of sleep, and being sure to eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. If you maintain this, you may find that your energy levels will increase, and you might feel more able to cope with stress.

At the end of the day, the virus not only affects people physically. The rates of many mental health issues have risen during this time; especially if you're in school, and haven't been able to socialize as much as you usually would. So, if you can, make sure to take some time out of your day to check in with your friends, and make sure they are OK. But, most importantly, make sure to take care of yourself during this hard time and look after yourself when you're feeling down. It won't be like this forever.

MENTAL HEALTH & HOSPITAL STAFF

Jennifer Brooks

The Coronavirus pandemic has impacted us in ways we couldn't possibly have imagined. As well as having to isolate from our loved ones, we are also having to be more vigilant with our health, and more aware of our own mortality, than ever before. It's little wonder that the vast majority of us are feeling lonely, anxious and dejected; especially for those of us who are living alone, or away from our families. Nonetheless, for frontline healthcare professionals, it isn't surprising that these feelings are amplified.

Due to the fact that doctors, nurses and healthcare assistants treat countless amounts of seriously ill patients every single day, it is easy for us to underappreciate the sacrifices that they make. They save lives, after all, so why would we have to worry about them getting sick? Nonetheless, according to a recent review on the physical and mental health impact of COVID-19 on healthcare workers, by Shaukat, Mansoor Ali and Razzak, healthcare workers are more likely than the general population to catch the virus, due to the fact that they are constantly exposed to it. They are also much more likely than the general population to suffer from skin damage from prolonged PPE usage, due to the fact that they have to wear this protective gear for up to 12 hours a day. This coupled with the fact that they also have to contend with a critical shortage of beds, and the constant exposure to death and tragedy, means that most healthcare workers have reported high levels of anxiety, insomnia and distress.

However, even though every doctor, nurse and health care worker on the planet is currently under exorbitant amounts of stress, for healthcare workers, who have vulnerable family

members, these feelings are even more intense. According to a BBC news article, by Monica Rimmer and Sophie Madden, many have even had to move away from home to protect their families from the disease. Shani Stocker, for instance, a nurse from Worcestershire in England, has an 11-year-old son who has an auto-immune condition. To protect him, Stocker has had to move out of the family home, and live in a caravan on their driveway.

As a result of the enormous sacrifices that healthcare workers are currently making, the least we can do for them is to show them our respect, and cut them some slack. We can do this by staying at home whenever we can, washing our hands, and trying to avoid going into hospital

for anything preventable. However, if the worst happens, and we, or one of our loved ones, does have to be admitted, we should bear in mind how hard our healthcare professionals are trying before snapping at them. Even if we're stressed ourselves, they're only human, and they're trying their absolute best.

Likewise, if you are a healthcare professional, try not to be hard on yourself. The whole world is behind you, and the sacrifices you are making to keep us all healthy. However, if you are struggling with the burden of this pressure, be sure to make time to call your family and friends for support. The app, Headspace, have also designed a free section called 'Weathering the storm,' which includes meditations and sleep exercises, to help calm you down after a long shift. I know it's hard right now, but this won't last forever. You're doing great.



NEW YEAR'S DAY

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2021

Jennifer Brooks



It goes without saying that on New Year's Eve 2019, none of us were expecting 2020 to have turned out the way it has. It is no exaggeration that this year has tested us like no other, and for many of us, the isolation and anxiety that the Coronavirus situation has caused has been unbearable. This being said, 2021 is a new year, and although the pandemic is far from over, better days are ahead. Keep reading to find out four things to be excited about in the new year.

First of all, after many deep lows, a massive highlight of 2020 has been the recent vaccine news. According to an article by GOV.UK, in the UK, the Pfizer vaccine, has already been given to more than 137,000 people in the first week of the vaccination program. Similarly, according to an article by James Gallagher, the Moderna vaccine, which has an effectiveness rate of almost 95%, will hopefully be ready for public use in the US very soon. Although it will take a long time for everyone to be immunized, it finally looks like the end is in sight, and we can look forward to enjoying more normality in the new year.

Furthermore, as a result of this newfound normality, we can hopefully look forward to more freedom. This includes finally being able to see Broadway shows again, like Plaza Suite. The comedy, set in suite 719 of New York City's Plaza Hotel, opened in 1968, and was supposed to be revived in 2020, starring Sarah Jessica Parker and her husband Matthew Broderick. However, due to the pandemic, it had to be cancelled. Nonetheless, luckily, after a year's delay, it will hopefully open on May 30th, which is definitely something for us to look forward to.

Nonetheless, if Broadway isn't your thing, there are also plenty of brilliant movies coming out in the new year. This includes many remakes, such as Cinderella, which is coming out on February 5th, starring Camila Cabello. Or, for those of you who are feeling nostalgic, a live action of the classic cartoon, Tom and Jerry, will be out on February 26th. Films are the perfect way to switch off, and forget about our problems for a while, so even if everything isn't completely back to normal, at least we can look forward to losing ourselves in these movies, with a big bag of popcorn.

Finally, one of the biggest highlights of 2021 will surely be the Olympics, which will be held in Tokyo from July 23rd to August 8th. This is a year later than they were supposed to be held, and many feared that the games would have to be postponed again, due to the pandemic. However, the International Olympic Committee have stated that they will definitely be going ahead, even if measures have to be put in place, to keep both the athletes, and the public, safe. Nonetheless, as well as the usual events of swimming, running and diving, according to the BBC, we can also look forward to seeing six new events, including climbing, surfing and skateboarding, which will surely be very refreshing to watch.

So, there you have it: four things to look forward to in the new year. Even though we still have a long way to go, we have a right to be excited about the future, and after 2020, we have definitely earned it. So, let's keep moving forward. It'll get better, I promise.

Together
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