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Highlights 2020: framing health stories

Despite the difficulties of this pandemic year, *The Lancet* received fascinating and varied entries for our Highlights 2020 photography competition. 15 striking photographs were selected for publication in this issue. Each picture captures a unique moment, highlighting a health story.

These images frame some of the health challenges during this unprecedented year. COVID-19 has disrupted some routine health services, and a couple of the pictures capture the impacts on cancer patients. The

disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on ethnic minority communities and vulnerable populations also features. Beyond the pandemic, other photographs illuminate progress in combating malaria or providing care to individuals who face difficulties in accessing health care. Importantly, the service and dedication of health-care workers are celebrated: medical students contributing to the COVID-19 response in Nepal, research nurses tracking the effects of the pandemic on pregnant women in Kenya, and a

medical laboratory scientist working on coronavirus testing in Singapore. And there are also new beginnings: two doctors in Portugal share a photo of their newborn daughter in tribute to the health professionals who continue to care for COVID-19 patients and as an image of hope for the future. We hope you enjoy Highlights 2020.

Joanna Palmer for the Highlights 2020 winning contributors

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Front-line health workers social distancing in Kenya

Grace Mwashigadi; Aga Khan University, Nairobi, Kenya

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on pregnant women and their infants in sub-Saharan Africa are not yet fully known; however, disruptions to the delivery of routine antenatal care is likely to have negative health consequences. The PRECISE (PREGnancy Care Integrating translational Science, Everywhere) Network aims to strengthen research capacity in Africa through a shared research project and is positioned to study the indirect effects of COVID-19 in sub-Saharan Africa through the research platform that has been developed. The network has experienced research and clinical teams in place, infrastructure available, and protocols established that can be implemented and scaled up to help understand the regional impacts of COVID-19. The team has worked to strengthen capacity for study recruitment and follow-up while ensuring the safety of all staff and participants. The PRECISE teams have procured personal protective equipment for research and clinical staff and conducted training for local facilities. We are delighted that research activities have resumed and are grateful for the commitment and dedication that have made this possible, such as the research nurses from the PRECISE Kenya team at Aga Khan University shown in this photograph.

The four nurses, Claire Ngure, Joy Njoroge, Claire Kiti, and Glory Mbaji, are based at the research site at Rabai Hospital, Kilifi, Kenya.

Mobility

Ramya Sampath; University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, Rochester, NY, USA

This photograph captures the ways that social and structural forces intensify disease and asks us to consider how supportive health-care infrastructure ought to be designed around patients' needs. Funded by a Fulbright-Nehru Fellowship, I joined members of the care team of Pallium India, a non-governmental organisation; we drove up the rocky, unpaved road to this individual's home in southern Kerala, India, and saw him walking by the side of the road using a prosthetic leg and crutches. He is visited weekly as part of Pallium India's home-based palliative care delivery for management of his peripheral vascular disease, which required amputation and the resultant pain management and functional limitations this has entailed. This man's home far away from health-care centres and irregular access to medications likely contributed to the advanced complications of his vascular disease. Although in some settings palliative care remains limited to end-of-life care alone, Pallium India's vision realises the potential of community-based palliative care to address serious health-related suffering, taking on not only the physical but also the psychological, social, and spiritual aspects of patients' and their families' experiences across the illness continuum. Pallium India provides inpatient and home-based care for patients in need of palliation and management of complex chronic diseases. Through political advocacy, social and financial support to this patient's family and many others, Pallium helps give new meaning to the concept of mobility, not only providing support for prosthetics and medical management, but also educational, nutritional, psychological, and financial stability for families in India.

Breast cancer care in Mexico interrupted by health-care reform

Ana S Ferrigno, Alejandra Platas, Beatriz Acevedo-Gattas, Cynthia Villarreal-Garza; *Medicos e Investigadores en la Lucha contra el Cancer de Mama, Mexico City, Mexico (ASF, AP, CV-G); Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico (BA-G)*

In Mexico, breast cancer patients were protected from catastrophic health expenses by Seguro Popular, a health-care system funded through governmental and beneficiary contributions. In January, 2020, Seguro Popular was replaced by Instituto de Salud para el Bienestar (INSABI), which aims to provide Mexicans with free access to basic medical services. The transition to this system has been challenging because multiple institutions previously affiliated with Seguro Popular are no longer sanctioned to deliver public health-care services. Furthermore, some states have refused the introduction of INSABI, claiming unclear operational rules. This situation has affected thousands of patients with breast cancer who have struggled to maintain the continuity of their care. A leader of Comité de Mujeres Fuertes, a patient-led initiative to restore medical attention to nearly 190 women with breast cancer in Nuevo Leon, is shown in the image holding a sign that states: "Leaving me without medical attention is my death sentence". Like her, many patients have an increased risk of worse breast cancer outcomes due to treatment suspension secondary to this complex health-care transition.

Rethinking prevention of infectious diseases

Calyn Tan Jen Ai, Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

As the world navigates through the COVID-19 pandemic, the concurrent threat from other infectious diseases remains relevant in many parts of the world, including Malaysia. This photograph was taken during tuberculosis screening of migrant workers in a local clinic in Malaysia during the pandemic. The emergence of COVID-19 has challenged the way we need to think about prevention of infectious diseases. Among migrant workers, prevention must also address the social determinants of health, such as overcrowding of living environments and unsafe workplace conditions, eliminating stigma and discrimination, and ensuring equitable access to health care. Where there are people and movement, the threat from infectious diseases persists and it is important that the health needs of these populations are equally prioritised. Integrated, multisectoral responses are crucial to address infectious diseases, with health included in all policies and across sectors.

The last stand: drug-resistant malaria in southeast Asia and beyond

Chanaki Amararatunga, Mehul Dhorda, Rupam Tripathy, Rob W van der Pluijm, Thomas J Peto, Alexander Kumar, Aijen M Dondorp, Nicholas J White, Mahidol-Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit, Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand (CA, MD, RT, RWvdP, TJP, AK, AMD, NJW); School of Population Health and Environmental Sciences, King's College London, London, UK (AK)

The young man pictured under his mosquito net in rural Cambodia was treated successfully for an artemisinin-resistant *Plasmodium falciparum* malaria infection. To prolong the useful life of artemisinin-based combination therapies, they have been combined with an additional partner drug in triple artemisinin-based combination therapies (TACTs). A large multinational multicentre randomised controlled clinical trial (TRAC II) showed that the TACTs, artemether-lumefantrine-amodiaquine and dihydroartemisinin-piperaquine-mefloquine, were safe, well tolerated, and efficacious, including against multidrug-resistant *P falciparum* malaria, providing hope for their deployment as a treatment and a means of delaying the further development and spread of antimalarial drug resistance. The Greater Mekong Subregion is a recurrent source of antimalarial drug resistance, and the countries in this region have committed to the elimination of *P falciparum* malaria. Reaching this target will be the only guaranteed way to protect the world from antimalarial resistance spreading from this region. TACTs could be an important tool to help achieve this. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there is no reason for complacency and every reason to strengthen malaria surveillance.

Challenges and hopes

Daniilo Buonsenso; Department of Woman and Child Health and Public Health, Fondazione Policlinico Universitario A Gemelli IRCCS, Rome, Italy; Dipartimento di Scienze Biomediche e Peroperatorie, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Rome, Italy; Center for Global Health Research and Studies, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Rome, Italy

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have huge health and socioeconomic effects worldwide. Women have experienced direct and indirect challenges in this pandemic. With school closures, for example, many women had to change their working habits and had to do more child care and unpaid labour, and for some this impacted on their careers. Women in part-time or temporary employment have also suffered from the economic impacts of the pandemic. Despite these challenges, there are also reasons to be hopeful. Kamala Harris was the first woman elected US Vice President. "But while I may be the first woman in this office", Harris said, "I won't be the last. Because every little girl watching tonight sees that this is a country of possibilities". Moreover, in her speech she honoured the contributions of "Black women, who are too often overlooked, but so often prove that they are the backbone of our democracy". This picture is of women in a different place, Burch Town in Sierra Leone, but aims to highlight how women are the backbone of our societies. This picture shows older women who work to raise the next generation and a young girl whose future will, hopefully, be a place of "possibilities" and rights rather than inequalities.

Hungry in the Himalayas

Aron D Rose, Yale University School of Medicine, Yale University School of Nursing, and Yale Multidisciplinary Center for Bioethics, New Haven, CT, USA; and The Eye Care Group, Orange, CT, USA

While the clear air and ravishing views of the mountains attract trekkers from around the world, between a half to a third of children younger than 5 years suffer the effects of malnutrition in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region. The child shown in this picture lives in the Annapurna region of Nepal. With climate change, rising environmental concerns, widespread soil erosion, and a decline in agrobiodiversity, some traditional mountain food habits have changed for the worse. Poverty, poor hygiene, infectious diseases, and limited education and literacy affect many children in these remote settings. Low dietary energy intake, vitamin and mineral deficiencies, stunting, and wasting can also affect these children. In addition, nearly half of mothers in this region are anaemic. Malnutrition perpetuates a cycle of poverty partly due to low productivity, increased health costs, and poor cognitive function. Continued efforts to reduce poverty and malnutrition in young children will pay dividends for generations to come.

Dharan medical students in the COVID-19 response in eastern Nepal

Prajjwal Pyakurel; School of Public Health and Community Medicine, B P Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Dharan, Nepal

This photograph highlights the contributions of a Dharan medical student team who worked on the COVID-19 front line assisting the local government. They have been involved in activities ranging from swab collection for COVID-19 testing to raising community awareness in Dharan, eastern Nepal. These medical students came from various medical institutions in Nepal and a few in Bangladesh and India. This photograph was shared because during the peak days of the COVID-19 pandemic when lots of people and even the health professionals were afraid to come to the front line, these students worked for their community. I was the coordinator of this campaign and I have not seen such genuine work done in 20 years of my medical career. I salute the dedication, commitment, and passion of these young medical students in serving the people of Dharan.

COVID-19 and natural masks

Himmatrao Saluba Bawaskar; Bawaskar Hospital and Clinical Research Centre Mahad, Raigad, Maharashtra, India

By the start of December, 2020, there were more than 1·8 million COVID-19 cases and over 47 000 COVID-19 deaths in Maharashtra state, India, alone. COVID-19 is a national calamity, and one that should not be availed as an opportunity for earning, including through health insurance. At the hospital in Mahad we have admitted and cared for many patients with COVID-19. Now there is threat of a second wave, it remains important, alongside other public health responses, to maintain control measures, such as physical distancing, proper wearing of masks, repeated handwashing with soap and water, good respiratory hygiene, and avoidance of mass gatherings. This photograph shows members of an Indigenous tribal community in Maharashtra state wearing leaves as face masks.

One for all, all for one: cancer survival in 2020

Alexander Kumar, Michael John Baser, School of Population Health and Environmental Sciences, King's College London, London, UK (AK, MJB); National Disease Registration Service, Health Improvement, Public Health England, London, UK (MJB). In rural Embu, Kenya, the organisation Oasis of Life hosts community awareness activities to support patients with breast cancer. In this picture, a mother points to her right breast having been lucky. Despite residing in an area with patchy medical coverage, she was diagnosed and treated for breast cancer, undergoing curative surgery and drug treatment. Before COVID-19, there were pre-existing huge global inequalities in cancer outcomes. The true impact from COVID-19 on cancer services and long-term impacts on patient outcomes will not be established for some time—global disruptions to routine cancer services in the pandemic could increase the number of avoidable cancer deaths due to diagnostic challenges and amended pathways to access chemotherapy and radiotherapy; additionally, clinical cancer trials have been negatively impacted. We need to rebuild global cancer services, supporting low-income and middle-income countries and health system strengthening, to ensure all patients with cancer receive the diagnosis, treatment, and care they need.

Combating malaria with long-lasting insecticidal nets

Pearl Gan; Photographer in Residence, Oxford University Clinical Research Unit, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Manu is shown attending a long-lasting insecticidal net (LLIN) event in her local village in remote Cambodia. Many of the local people in her village work in the forests and have had malaria sometime in their lives. The villagers know the importance of LLINs for the prevention of mosquito-borne disease.

In Cambodia, the nationwide LLIN programme was initiated to ensure these nets are distributed to local communities, such as farms and plantations in malaria-endemic zones, as identified by local district and health-centre staff. In these communities, the provision of LLINs matters because they can help save lives.

Temporary lodgings

Mohib Raza, St George's, University of London, London, UK

Regular handwashing, sanitising, and physical distancing are simple ways to prevent the spread of coronavirus. However, these measures are difficult for people without a place they can call home. This picture shows the humble residence of a rough sleeper in London, UK, taken during the second national lockdown in England during November, 2020. Shelter, a charity focused on providing support and services for people struggling with bad housing and homelessness, reported in 2019 that one in 52 people were homeless in the UK capital. Many of these individuals can have multimorbidities, including communicable and non-communicable diseases, mental health problems, injury, and alcohol and substance use, putting them at increased risk of premature mortality. As the COVID-19 pandemic has progressed, it has become clear that not enough is being done to recognise and address the complex needs of homeless people.

Disentangling COVID-19 inequity in the UK

Alexander Kumar, Greg G C Hugenholz, Rachel Burns, Parth Patel, Robert W Aldridge, School of Population Health and Environmental Sciences, King's College London, London, UK (AK); Centre for Public Health Data Science, Institute of Health Informatics, University College London, London, UK (GGCH, RB, PP, RWA)

Diversity within the UK workforce is one of its key strengths. David, featured, migrated to the UK from west Africa at the age of 40 years. He lives in a socioeconomically deprived part of south London and has continued to work as a health support worker. Health-care workers from ethnic minority communities have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 in the UK. Within the UK, COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated pre-existing social inequalities. In England and Wales, during 2020 it was found that Black men were over three times more likely and Black women over two times more likely to die from COVID-19 compared with White people. Evidence has indicated that structural differences in social conditions such as occupation and housing are important. The Virus Watch Health Equity Study, set up by University College London, is examining these inequities to provide better insights into why some communities are suffering more from COVID-19, and what can be done to mitigate that. Such evidence is important if we are to address the socially stratified structures and discrimination that make ethnicity a determinant of health.

Everyday hero: COVID-19 laboratory staff in Singapore

Pearl Gan; Photographer in Residence, Oxford University Clinical Research Unit, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

A medical laboratory scientist at the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID) in Singapore tests for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) using a PCR test. This highly sensitive test detects the presence of SARS-CoV-2 RNA in samples from patients, such as throat or nasal swabs. For the past few months, the National Public Health Laboratory in NCID has ramped up testing capabilities to meet the high demand for testing. In this laboratory, staff must wear protective gear to operate safely, while maintaining a high level of productivity and quality. The work of the dedicated staff is essential to control COVID-19. I am grateful to Professor Leo Yee-Sin and the NCID team for their efforts in responding to COVID-19 and helping to keep Singapore safe.

Love in the time of COVID-19

Ana Peixoto, Rui Silvestre Ferreira; Coimbra, Portugal

We, Ana and Rui, are both medical doctors. Rui, shown here holding our daughter, has been working as a front-line doctor for the COVID-19 response in Portugal. Our first child was born in April at the peak of Portugal's first COVID-19 wave. We decided to live in different houses when I, Ana, was 8 months pregnant—at that time we didn't know much about the virus and we wanted to protect each other and our daughter. Rui could not attend our daughter's birth, and he only met his child when I left the hospital. This picture was taken when we arrived home after Laura's birth. We share it as a sign of hope and to honour the dedication of health-care workers caring for COVID-19 patients.