Our new world

In January, it appeared that the new year would start off very promising: 2020 was to be a great year of innovation, learning and prosperity in the dental industry. It was during that month that many of us became aware of something happening in China, an evolving epidemic caused by a new coronavirus strain. We were still going to events, travelling around the globe and busy in our practice of dentistry. In January, I had the honour of presenting at a major meeting in Istanbul in Turkey, where we were still shaking hands, hugging and sitting shoulder to shoulder listening to our colleagues present their work from the podium. At the end of January, the International Digital Days inaugural meeting was held in Paris in France—a wonderful and successful venue, plenty of vendors and products demonstrated, high-level presentations delivered by speakers from many different parts of the globe, and hands-on workshops too! There were also dinners with our colleagues, friends and corporate partners all in close proximity within the crowded restaurants. We went on planes, trains and automobiles; it was part of our everyday world. And then Europe started to notice that the virus was spreading.

In the US, one of our largest dental meetings, the Chicago Dental Society Midwinter Meeting, was held in late February, and there were thousands of participants at the various associated meetings located all around the heart of the windy city, one of which was a highlight for me: LMT LAB DAY, where digital is a major focus of an event held always at the Hyatt hotel. After long daily sessions, the bars were full at night, as were the great restaurants of Chicago. Then our world suddenly changed and came to a screeching halt.

Within a few weeks, the McCormick Place convention centre in Chicago was transformed from one of the largest event halls in the US to a hospital to care for people ill with COVID-19. The same happened to the Javits Center in New York City and many others in the US and around the globe. The dental industry has been hard hit owing to our constant exposure to aerosols generated from intra-oral procedures. However, we in the dental industry are resilient, resourceful and innovative. Brilliant minds set to work immediately to help with the lack of certain supplies crucial to containing the spread of the virus, using the technology that we know so well, digital. We should be so proud of our industry for its ingenuity in producing 3D-printed face mask frames to help seal off the face from exposure, in response to the severe shortage of personal protective equipment, even offering free STL files for downloading, and 3D-printed nasopharyngeal test swabs, which are needed to collect samples, designed by clinicians and laboratory technicians fluent in CAD software. There are innovative designs for 3D-printed face masks with snap-on HEPA filters or specially fabricated suction devices to reduce exposure to aerosols.

Our new normal has redefined countries, cities, states, towns and populations across the globe. We will come out of this better and stronger. We are seeing an entirely new aspect of the power of technology and the new digital workflow that we rely on today and highlight in our publication. Stay safe, stay strong, stay healthy and keep innovating!

Respectfully,
Dr Scott D. Ganz
Editor-in-Chief