

# On reflection: a pandemic and the new normal



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Right now, if there were no border closures, travel bans and threat of the invisible enemy, COVID-19, we would all be together attending the joint 1st International Surgical Wound Complications Advisory Panel (ISWCAP) & 3rd Global Wound Healing Meeting in the beautiful Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A seminal event for ISWCAP as newly founded global organisation, and the annual event, a highlight for all ASEAN and MSWCP members to enjoy. Both Professor Harikrihna K Nair and I are very excited to partner across the Asia Pacific rim to bring you the latest innovations and advances in education, research and wound healing practice with a focus on surgical wounds. With a reschedule to March 2021, a very wise and necessary decision to ensure the safety and well being of all, the new dates are 4–6 March 2021.

As we head towards the end of an extraordinary and challenging 2020, it signals a time to take stock and reflect on the year that was. The year of a global pandemic causing huge pressure on all health professionals and clinical settings. For Australia, healthcare providers were stretched to provide services where non-essential healthcare were paused, elective surgery procedures postponed as well as assessing and treating patients remotely. The pause on wound care research and clinical trials for some was also felt. We all needed to stay connected in whichever form it came; zoom meetings, teleconferencing and virtual congresses, albeit with an unhealthy dose of digital fatigue.

Australia immediately implemented travel restriction, border closures and lockdown as a rapid response to the spreading COVID-19 pandemic. As a nation now we have our health and safety in good stead due to the strict measures implemented by our state and territory leaders very early in the pandemic.

How did we achieve this given our geographic distances and our right to

govern over our own provinces our constitutional right that meant the very cessation of the freedoms we enjoy.

We are 10 months on and my family and I are enjoying the fruits of these decisions. I reside in Western Australia, the largest state in Australia, which has potentially experienced the lowest incidence and death rate of COVID-19 in Australia. Our population is 2.7 million and we are bound by 12,889kms of coastline. To illustrate the size of Western Australia, you could fit South East Asia and still have room for some parts of North East Asia as well. However, let's, keep this in context. Our population and density of living does not compare with those countries who have been hardest hit by COVID-19. However, not to rest on our laurels, we must not become complacent and be vigilant. We are still on high alert and implement strict measures when the invisible enemy raises a skirmish; however, on balance for most of the states and territories we can enjoy the freedom that comes from restricting these very freedoms during a crisis. I know Australia does not have the population of some of the more hard hit countries. However, on reflection, we are an example of how, when we listen to the bare facts of science and truths of medical research and what we need to do to survive, we function as one. We work together. Plain and simple.

Our new normal is one peppered with measures to deal with potential outbreaks. With the promise of an effective vaccine in the new year and the hope of face-to-face networking and collaboration it brings, we have a newfound appreciation of unity. What 2020 has taught me is that we are in a global marathon; we must take breaks to refuel and make sure we connect with our fellow marathoners to make sure no one is left behind. It has also taught me about the enduring spirit that is forged in crisis and manifests in resilience, which makes for a better world and will lead us all out of one of the darkest periods of history.

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