



VIEWS AND REVIEWS

THE BOTTOM LINE

Partha Kar: Covid-19—we must keep faith in our experts

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We live in the age of information overload. Once you factor in the unregulated world of social media and self-appointed experts, as well as the urge for people to jump in with their two pennies' worth and a disregard for real experts, it becomes quite difficult to find sources you can trust. Then covid-19 appears, and the information world looks like a maze full of pitfalls for anyone trying to ascertain the correct information.

Understandable worries abound, and recent times have also shown the impact that healthcare professionals can have, in positive and negative ways. Huge followings don't necessarily mean that account holders have expertise, yet their views are seen and taken on board by large numbers of people, many of whom will be isolating themselves from their usual, face to face social networks.

Misinformation is spreading along with the virus. Polarised political views, and the scars of the Brexit debate, have perhaps made some people forget the importance of working together as a nation, and being kind to others, in these difficult times.

When tweeting that "Many will die—especially the elderly," think about the effect this has on people who are elderly or vulnerable or whose relatives are. We know that fear will exacerbate many mental and physical health issues, but somewhere this knowledge seems to have been lost by some fellow healthcare professionals. In an effort to make a political point, is the ethos of "be kind" getting lost?

People with diabetes are at increased risk of illness if they contract covid-19. Thankfully, there is some reliable information

around. If you're a healthcare professional and you'd like to direct your patient to a reliable source, it's worth looking at the information from Diabetes UK and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF UK), which has been developed in conjunction with NHS England and Public Health England.

In short, as a healthcare professional, ensure that you've given any patients with diabetes the appropriate number of testing strips; ensure that they have access to telephone support for queries and that they know what to do when ill; and reinforce the basics of hand hygiene and social distancing, as advocated by Public Health England.

These are extraordinary times, and we need to have faith in the people leading us, from a healthcare point of view. It's perhaps not very modern to say so—but trust the experts. My parents are both in high risk groups, and they're here visiting the UK as part of their golden wedding anniversary. With those high stakes, I place my faith in Chris Whitty and his team.

It's time we all adhered to that principle and let the team do their job. There's a time when we all need to learn to follow. This would be it.

Competing interests: www.bmj.com/about-bmj/freelance-contributors.

Provenance and peer review: Commissioned; not externally peer reviewed.

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