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“Corona” is a word traditionally used to describe the halo around the sun during a total solar eclipse. The appearance of a virus with not only its physical appearance but also its namesake referring to the sun couldn’t be more ironic or fitting; everything in our lives now, especially my uprooted medical education, seems to revolve around this novel infectious disease.

Returning to the other side of the classroom as a first-year medical student after teaching middle school mathematics in Delaware was definitely an adjustment in itself; however, this coronavirus pandemic has made that return even more complicated. Just as we had finished anatomy, I found myself so badly yearning for our third trimester, systems-based teaching. The clinical relevance was almost tangible in our first few lectures of this term. That exciting feeling prompted by the intricacies of studying physiology that once sparked my initial interest in medicine was back! After two weeks into classes, however, like many other students around the world, all of our lectures were moved online, and the quarantine began, with that newfound excitement for clinical medicine diminishing from behind my computer screen.

Quarantine has almost felt punitive at times with certain states extending their reopening dates further and further based on the actions and opinions of a small group of people (It was almost reminiscent of my teaching days, when I would shave another five minutes off of recess for everyone for the misbehavior of a few). I think at this time, teaching has become more important than ever before. People who are hoarding toilet paper and hand sanitizer are running around, inadvertently inciting panic using words like “zoonoses” or reciting half-truths in a desperate attempt to educate themselves and others on a topic that clinical researchers can’t unravel fast enough. It’s chaotic. Clinical researchers and physicians are racing the clock to understand this virus and educate the masses at home with accurate information before they become too misinformed by the media or whatever they have deduced from their “coronavirus symptoms” google search. However, I think -despite these certain individuals’ actions- they are in the minority of individuals who are in quarantine. The majority of people seem to say “we are here, and we are listening” to their local, trusted medical professionals. I believe that this renewed public trust in physicians is possibly one of the best things to come from this pandemic.

It seems like an overnight phenomenon; one day the same patients who were more content to challenge a doctor on their diagnosis based on what they read on WebMD now trust doctors more than ever before. Even family friends have been messaging me asking what I would recommend, despite only being in my first year of medical school. I think that a small good in this pandemic is that with the initial lack of general information about the virus, patients’ fate rested in the quality of the education of the very same medical professionals that they were so willing to argue with for an antibiotic for the common cold only a month before. I don’t want this to read as some kind of ego boost for doctors; however, I think people have progressively lost respect for the sacrifices that physicians have made in their years of training to make them competent enough to take care of their complex patients, and I think that time and commitment to lifelong learning should be recognized and trusted again by the general public.

These sacrifices made by veteran doctors and residents alike have become even more apparent in times of COVID-19. Some of my friends who are not even one year into residency

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have been pushed onto COVID units without their consent or adequate PPE, and despite their own pre-existing conditions, like asthma, that may make them more vulnerable to suffering from more severe symptoms if they were to contract coronavirus. The same individuals making these decisions for residents would never dream of putting a non-medical professional in such a potentially dangerous position; yet residents are expected to do as they are told and try to glean some useful clinical knowledge in a time of uncharted territory. These same students are working for up to nine days straight, dealing with the management of these complex cases and all of the emotional baggage surrounding them. Many of these residents have discussed their miserable working conditions unique to COVID-19, which in turn have seriously taken a toll on them emotionally and ultimately have led them to feel increased senses of hopelessness and burnout. In my home state of Delaware, we are looking at the ticking time bomb situation that is a great physician shortage, especially in primary care. If we truly want the next generation of these young physicians to practice well into their years and avoid burnout to enjoy the fruits of their labor, something must be done to address the experiences of these individuals.

Helplessly watching the pandemic from behind my online cardiology classes has given me a new perspective on my career medicine, for good and for bad. While listening to residents' stories, I can't help but feel that I'm looking down the barrel of a gun at times. When you're in the library for up to fourteen hours a day, you want to look to those ahead of you to know that it will all be worth it one day- and to see these miserable young physicians, drowning in debt and having sacrificed some of the best years of their lives to books, definitely forces people in my position to constantly reevaluate your career choice. However, I still firmly believe that the opportunity to practice medicine is one of the highest privileges one can earn in their lifetime- despite all of this, I'm still enamored by the practice of healing with one's knowledge base and physical training.

The corona, as it refers to the sun, is only visible during a total solar eclipse. When all is dark around us, we must look for the wonderful blessings around us. We must hold on to the fact that this eclipse is only temporary, despite only really being able to see the halo of positivity in the darkness. In every total solar eclipse, there will be a time when the return of the sun will make the corona no longer visible, and we can return to a new normalcy with a refreshed sense of purpose, thankfulness, and kindness towards one another.