

HEALTH HUMANITIES

Today's lesson is brought to us by COVID-19

D. Ni Chróinín

When planning our program for Year 2020,
None of us could have foreseen,
That teaching and clinical care for this year
Would be like nothing that we'd ever seen.

When COVID arrived, we were all in shock;
How would we teach a class?
A friendly in-person gathering
Had served all tutorials past.

So what to do now? How would we cope
With this interloper now in the room?
Put on our lippy? Smile for the camera?
And conduct it all over Zoom?

The clinical school team was stoutly unflappable,
They took it all in their stride;
They adapted and fiddled, thinking outside the box,
When lesser mere mortals might hide.

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So students were told that things might be different
But that wouldn't mean worse or impaired;
Because pulling together, we could conquer this challenge,
We wouldn't be running off scared.

The senior students were keen to be heroes,
Eager to spread their wings;
They flew as Assistants in Medicine,
Helping with all sorts of things.

At least they got to stay on the wards,
And learn from patients each day;
But junior students were not so employed,
And were gently herded away.

So in PJs and trackies they turned up for "class",
From their bedrooms, they logged in online;
With headphones adorned, and coffee in hand,
They seemed to adapt pretty fine.

A culture of screen time, lamented so oft,
Proved now a boon to the group,
As they clicked in and out, video on or mike mute,
A true technological coup.

Of course it was lonely, alone in their rooms,
No nights out for many a week;
But group chats and forums kept spirits afloat,
If psyches grew tired or weak.

And then, after months, come springtime,
The hospital doors opened wide,
Be-masked and hands washed we ushered
The returning students inside.

"Now we know that you only have 2 weeks per block,
And not the usual four;
But with focus and help you can do this,
You'll cover the content and more!"

The students took heart and an Alcowipe,
They wiped dusty stethoscopes clean;
They strode to the wards, their energy high,
Eyes alight and minds fresh and keen.

The teachers were also enthused,
Having given no tutes for so long;
They lectured and questioned and probed and explored,
To guide the students along.

The exams fast approached, last hurdle in sight,
OSCES, and vivas, the odd MCQ;
Students took a deep breath, gave it their best,
Leapt through the tests and sighed "Phew!"

Who knows what the next year may throw at us?
For who has a crystal ball?
But COVID has taught us that working together,
Education will conquer, not fall.

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