

# — Editorial

## AND SUDDENLY, ALL THE QUESTIONS CHANGED

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I intend for this editorial to start off with a famous quote by writer *Mario Benedetti*: “When we thought we had all the answers, suddenly, all the questions changed.” In some way, it is what most people have experienced throughout this COVID-19 pandemic. This tempestuous viral load has changed the life of us all, no matter the work, economic and social sphere. Nonetheless, through history, we have observed this to be anything but new. At a time in the past, my father, *Professor Enrique Úraga Peña*, told me stories about epidemics, including some which he experienced while being a medical resident at Lazareto in Guayaquil’s Junta de Beneficiencia, founded in 1946, which later became the Infectology Hospital, acting as a common host for leprosy and typhoid fever, as well as poliomyelitis, paludism, diphtheria, AIDS, dengue and cholera at a later stage.

However, history goes much further back. In 1708, smallpox killed dozens of people in Guayaquil. Moreover, between 1842 and 1843, Guayaquil was hit by an epidemic of *vómito prieto* or yellow fever, which was courageously tackled by *Governor Don Vicente Rocafuerte*. This virus killed 2073 people. Additionally, from 1918 to 1919, Ecuador was not immune to the deadly Spanish flu outbreak, which took the lives of millions of people around the world; our country lost 185 inhabitants.

As outlined above, what is currently being experienced is not unknown; and while there is a different infectious agent, along with easier access to global information and a greater contagion rate, fear and economic damage have not changed, and the affliction caused by losing your loved ones carries an equally painful sentiment. Not unlike previous troubling situations, questions have changed, and new answers have arisen. Accordingly, and despite the dramatic effects, I agree with Dante Alejandro’s affirmation: “You have two options: to throw in the towel and quit, or to use that towel to wipe the sweat of your forehead and carry on.”

Dermatologists are not free from what is to come. Many realities must be faced: new and cautious forms of care, substantial procedural precautions, novel pathologies directly or indirectly related to the virus, mandatory use of teledermatology. Thus, it is reasonable to justify *George López’s* quote: “When things are bad, it’s the best time to reinvent yourself.” And this is what we have been forced to do during this time in order to survive and move forward: reinvent ourselves.

On a personal note, due to this cruel disease, I have lost wonderful and much-loved lifelong friends. I consider reinventing oneself, as well as moving forward, to be a way of paying tribute and a personal expression of how much they are missed, bringing *Benjamin Franklin* to mind: “There is nothing in life without its lessons. If you are alive, there will always be something to learn.” I do believe we have all learnt a great amount throughout this period. Moreover, I merely hope *JEGRMAUP’s* encouraging quote is translated into a glorious reality, as well as a new and enlightening dawn: “When obscure reality transforms into a clear dawn, all hurtful tears will vanish, while lively and hopeful smiles will come to light.”

Dr. Enrique Úraga P.