

Tylenol or Advil. You can reach me at Shop Rite: (732) xxx-xxxx or on my cell phone: (732) xxx-xxxx.

*"My God will provide all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."*

— Philippians 4:19 —

With Blessings and Prayers for all of you!

Barbara Hoagland – xxxx Pinewood Road

Barbara went out of her way to try and meet the needs of her neighbors... most of whom she does not know well, if at all. THAT'S what it means to "be Jesus" to others. Jesus made it His mission to meet needs – physical, emotional, spiritual. By sacrificing His innocent life on a Cross, Jesus met our greatest and most desperate need: the forgiveness of our sins. When we give our lives and our sins to Jesus, He gives us His forgiveness in exchange – which includes His promise of spending eternity in heaven. (As believers, we need to share that with people who need to hear it... and we need to do it now.) And when we "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:31-33), Jesus also promises to meet our basic physical needs of food, clothing, and shelter – things that we currently fret about whether we'll have enough. By trusting in Jesus alone for our salvation, He even meets our greatest emotional need, which is peace. With the rampant COVID anxiety, peace is something everyone desperately longs for, right? Well, if we really trust that God is in control, and if we fervently seek Him in prayer, then He will give us "the peace of God that surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). I have peace right now, in the midst of a global pandemic, because I can look back on the turmoil of my past and I can see how faithful God was back then. Circumstances change. God does not.

So I just want to encourage you to find ways to "be Jesus" to others. In these UNCERTAIN times, point them to the One whose promises in the Bible ARE CERTAIN. With social distancing it might take a little creativity (like Barbara's toilet paper care bags) and a lot of sacrifice, but now is the time for us to step up to the plate. Let's be part of God's answer to our prayers for a massive Christian revival.

May we focus on our Savior, not our Situation. May we focus on Christ, not the Crisis. May we seek God's wisdom and direction as we navigate through this dark and uncharted territory. May we respond to this pandemic with love, care, and compassion for others as we ponder the brevity of life. May we follow the instructions of the authorities, no matter how inconvenient they may be, in order to minimize the spread of infection. May we make the most of every opportunity to share our faith in Jesus.

***And may the Gospel of Christ spread as quickly as Coronavirus!***



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## Innovative Pharmacy Instruction During the Disruptive COVID-19 Pandemic

By Rocco J. Rotello, Elisha Injeti, and Timothy D. Veenstra

The unexpected arrival of COVID-19 has brought many significant changes to our daily lives. Routine procedures such as hand washing took on greater importance. Going to the grocery store requires remembering not only your grocery list but also your face mask and hand sanitizer. While we used to go about our daily business unaware of those around us, we suddenly became cognizant of anyone approaching within six feet. With many churches closing, we had to develop a plan for worship services. Many people resorted to family-led services or watching live-streams from their local church. While the new format of church may have been radically different, thankfully Jesus promised us that "for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20; KJV). Unfortunately, millions of Americans found themselves unemployed during this pandemic, with many having to rely

on food banks and other forms of support to feed their families and pay their bills.

The educational systems were forced to undergo vast changes to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. In the middle of the ongoing spring 2020 semesters, in-school classes for elementary, high school, college, and university students were canceled, requiring teachers to deliver lessons remotely. Teachers and professors had a matter of days to alter their teaching format from in-classroom to remote instruction. A survey conducted by Inside Higher Ed® during the pandemic showed that 90% of institutions utilized some form of online education to complete the spring 2020 semester.<sup>1</sup> Per this result, over three-quarters of instructors moved some of their courses online. Most of the remaining instructors who responded to the survey were already teaching their course online or were in an area of the country where in-classroom higher education had not been suspended. Instructors with no online experience were faced with many challenges and uncertainties such as how effective their online instruction would be, and how to obtain internet access for themselves and students. The intricacies of online delivery platforms such as Zoom, or Microsoft Teams had to be mastered in a matter of days. In addition, many assignments, particularly those requiring hands-on participation (such as lab experiments and art projects) had to be adjusted in a matter of days. Maintaining student integrity during tests and exams became a greater challenge as in-person proctoring was no longer an option.

Colleges and universities throughout the nation required most students to leave campuses and return home. This mass evacuation represented an enormous burden to students. Many students had to travel several hours and thousands of miles to return to their homes; however, international students could remain on campus in unique housing situations. For many students who left campus, they had to leave their possessions behind and arrange to retrieve them at a later date under scheduled protocols. Probably the greatest burdens students took home was not their physical belongings, but the uncertainty of how they were going to finish their courses in the short term; and when and if things would ever return to normal in the future. The emotional impact of the virus was especially difficult for graduating seniors who were almost certainly going to be deprived of the pomp and circumstance of their long-anticipated graduation ceremony celebrating their achievement. Far more concerning than missing a proper graduation ceremony is the possibility of also facing an uncertain job market with student loans to pay.

### **The Classroom Became Disrupted but Innovative**

For many, this switch to online instruction represented the first time they would learn entirely from home in the absence of any live instruction. Many people may envision the comforts of home as a benefit; however, for some

students it became a disruptive change to the learning structure they were accustomed to. Although class times may not have changed, everything around them was suddenly different. Instead of waking up, getting ready to enter the public world, and heading to the cafeteria for breakfast, students simply woke up, put on sweatpants and a t-shirt and grabbed a bowl of cereal from the kitchen. Instead of sitting at desks surrounded by their peers, they sat alone at a desk in their bedroom, kitchen, or family room. Students no longer had the opportunity to socialize with their peers for a few minutes before the start of class; rather, they sat in silence waiting for their professor's Zoom meeting to begin. Instead of having lectures presented in often animated ways, students were relegated to viewing their professor's head and shoulders in static positions so as to not leave the frame of the video. Asking questions or engaging in discussions was difficult as students had to unmute and interrupt their professor or type their question in the chat room and wait for the professor to realize a question had been raised. Students could enter "breakout rooms" to discuss assignments and clinical cases, however, this virtual environment lacks the benefit of physical interaction that generates creative discussion. Many breakout rooms were met with awkward silence when students were unable to initiate a discussion. It was difficult for the professor to navigate throughout the breakout rooms to interject and provide guidance as they normally would in a classroom setting. When each class session was completed, students no longer gathered to discuss the class or approach the professor with questions, but simply logged off their computer and proceeded to their next daily task.

So as to not leave this topic on a note of hopelessness, let's consider how God has blessed us with the ability to continue classes during this pandemic. While most students are accustomed to our current technology, we, as professors, understand that if this pandemic had hit when we were students, things would have been completely different. If classes were suspended 10 to 20 years ago, there would have been no option that would be even remotely as convenient as what is available today. Students would have had to forego entire semesters of learning. The financial losses incurred by colleges and universities, as well as their employees, would have been catastrophic. In retrospect, we need to praise God for blessing us with the technologies that allow us to communicate in real time directly from the comforts of our homes. As Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 3:11 (KJV) "He hath made everything beautiful in his time." God allows all things to occur at the time that He wills it. We can praise God that He was not surprised by the COVID-19 pandemic and He allowed it to occur knowing we would have resources by which to endure this trial.

### **Providing Grace and Flexibility in the Disrupted Classroom**

The change in scenery brought many practical challenges to students that often required very little thought on their part.



With much of the structure that surrounds academic learning gone from their daily routine, it became easy for students to lose track of due dates for assignments and even exam dates. During personal interactions, students would often remind each other about upcoming deadlines. The importance of tracking and meeting deadlines was a proficiency that professors teach; however, not all students have yet to master this organizational skill. With all the distractions that came with the home environment, many students struggled with remembering and meeting deadlines. Our solution as professors: provide grace for overdue assignments. Deadlines were assigned and students were strongly encouraged to abide by these deadlines; however, we did not penalize students for submitting assignments past the due date. While many educators will vehemently disagree with this approach, our philosophy was based on several factors. Students were mentally juggling challenges such as changes in their course work, trying to move their belongings from school to home, dealing with home-based distractions, suffering from cabin fever, and worrying about when life will return to normal. Our philosophy of relaxing deadlines came down to one factor: the workplace demands your best work, not your fastest work. We wanted to ensure that students did not submit a rushed assignment to avoid penalties. They would learn little by simply rushing through an assignment. Rather, we desired that they felt relaxed enough to spend an adequate amount of time completing the assignment properly.

Another area of flexibility that was implemented was the class meeting time. Students leaving campus went to homes across four of the six time zones of the United States. As our class was scheduled for 8:00 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST), this change would require students in the Pacific Standard Time (PST) to be prepared for a 5:00 a.m. lecture! Although part of student training is demanding a strong work ethic, which requires getting up early for work, the 5:00 a.m. time slot was overly demanding. The class lecture time was therefore moved to 9:00 a.m. EST. This move not only benefited students on the west coast, but was universally welcomed by all.

We also pre-recorded many lectures and posted them on the class site approximately 3 to 5 days before the live class meeting. This effort provided students not only access to the lecture slides but also the professor's narrative describing the content. An added benefit was that by pre-recording the lectures, professors were able to rehearse material before the live session. The number one positive comment given by students in their class evaluations was the availability of having both recorded and live lectures. Many students commented that being able to stop and rewind the pre-recorded lectures allowed them to focus on concepts that they didn't understand the first time they heard them. The students also commented that the pre-recorded lectures made them feel more knowledgeable and better prepared

for the live sessions. One obvious concern was that students would opt to listen to the pre-recorded lecture and not attend the live sessions. Fortunately, Zoom allowed us to track class participation and we found there was no drop off in student participation during the live sessions.

### **Innovative Assessment Options**

Just like every other part of the course, tests and exams had to be given remotely. This format comes with many challenges, the foremost of these being student integrity. Institutions have put "safeguards" into effect to prevent cheating on tests and exams including remote proctoring by student family members, having students sign integrity pledges,<sup>2</sup> and technology solutions such as ExamMonitor® through ExamSoft®, which continuously records audio and video of the student's behavior during the test or exam. With the sudden switch from in-person to online teaching and the reorganization that students had to undergo, it would have been very challenging to arrange for proctoring agreements to be completed by each student. The cost of adding ExamMonitor® was prohibitively expensive for the number of students within the many courses in the department.

One thing that needs to be pointed out: the course that we taught was a five-week module in which the students had 64 hours of lectures. In most weeks, four hours of lectures were given every Monday through Thursday with an exam scheduled for the following Friday. With the condensed schedule and adjustments that students were required to make, we decided to alter the normal exam schedule in favor of one that provided the students with more flexibility. The loss of their school environment left many students without quiet spaces (e.g., libraries, study rooms) that are conducive to effective studying and exam administration. Students were still given a two-hour time limit; however, they were permitted to take the exam any time between Friday morning and Sunday evening. This flexibility allowed those, who felt the need, to study for an additional two days before taking the exam.

An obvious criticism of this format would be that students may be more prone to cheat. To eliminate one potential avenue of cheating, the exams were all open book. An added benefit of this format was that it allowed the exam to focus on the highest level of taxonomic learning, in which students were required to analyze the question before coming up with an answer rather than simply memorizing a stated fact. Studies have also shown that take-home exams reduce students' anxiety<sup>3</sup>; something that is at a high level in this pandemic era. One student testified that he enjoyed the time spent on the open book exam as it enabled him to think critically and make proper clinical judgments required to answer the questions. The student remarked that the open book format mimicked real-life scenarios in which he had access to information and was challenged to apply his knowledge using critical thinking.

## **Integrating Biblical Lessons into Class Discussions**

As Christian pharmacists, we are called upon to integrate Biblical teaching into our lessons. This integration can be done through corporate prayer, devotional times, reflecting on how God has intricately designed His creation, and relating personal experiences of God's provision with each other. Online teaching may have disrupted many of the personal interactions that we were previously afforded daily, but it has not eliminated our ability to integrate important spiritual truths in our instruction. While the mode of delivery is different, we can teach the same material, conduct corporate prayer, and generate discussion on God's control over these challenging times. Indeed, this pandemic affords greater opportunities to integrate God's Word into our lessons than we have had in a long time.

One morning, I (Tim Veenstra) was listening to a radio broadcast in which the host told a story of a pastor who was experiencing a challenging time and had reached out to the renowned pastor and Christian writer Dr. Warren Wiersbe for guidance. After sharing his burden, the pastor recalled Dr. Wiersbe asking "how he was going to make sure he did not let this trial go to waste." Where did Dr. Wiersbe receive this wisdom? In his book, *Why Us? When Bad Things Happen to God's People*, Dr. Wiersbe describes his conversation with a friend whose husband had lost his sight and then developed an incurable illness.<sup>4</sup> The woman then suffered a stroke, forcing her to retire. As an encouragement, Dr. Wiersbe contacted the woman to tell her that he was "praying for God's healing (if it's God's will), for strength, for mercy in pain, and so on." After thanking him, the woman asked Dr. Wiersbe to pray for a specific request that she had: "Pray that I won't waste this suffering."

What a wonderful lesson to teach our students! During our course, we reminded students that the pandemic provides many opportunities to demonstrate to the world what being "Christ-like" really means. We could emulate Christ in our prayer lives by praying for those who were infected with COVID-19, and also those whose lives were impacted emotionally through the loss of a loved one or financially through the loss of employment. God has given us a great opportunity to "put feet to our prayers." With all of the current unemployment due to COVID-19, we can challenge students to make a difference through supporting foodbanks either monetarily or by volunteering. The key is finding ways to show Christ's love in our deeds and actions rather than just focusing on ourselves and our own challenges.

## **Teaching Contentment and the Joy in Giving**

In Philippians 4:11, Paul writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (KJV). This verse provides many useful lessons during this pandemic and gives us an opportunity as professors to

minister to our students through both our career and life experiences. This verse is primarily associated with how we can learn to be content regardless of our circumstances. If something can be learned, that implies that it can also be taught. How do we teach students to be content in these times? One strategy is to share personal experiences from our own lives that demonstrate God's provision. As professors, we have amassed many more life experiences than our students. These experiences can include times of illness, doubt, and failings where God has protected, reassured, and provided for us. This lesson can be readily conveyed to students by suggesting they reflect not only on their current circumstances but also how God has provided for them throughout their lives.

Having physical distance between students and faculty generally diminishes chances to encourage students to trust in God's provision; yet the pandemic also provides opportunities to increase student mentoring. This situation is especially true for our 3rd year PharmD (P3) students, who are worried about the delay in starting their final year of onsite experiential education. Unlike in the past, when P3 students were often too busy to meet with their faculty advisor, the pandemic allowed us to schedule meetings with individual P3 students either in person or via video conferencing. These individual interactions allowed us to encourage them in the Lord by sharing testimonies of God's faithfulness during difficult times. Students found these conversations reduced their stress and boosted their trust that God is still in control of their future.

An important lesson can also be taught from the introductory phrase of Philippians 4:11. In this phrase, Paul is conveying his thanks for their gift – not because he was in need, but because it is good for them to be givers. As Paul wrote in Acts 20:35 (KJV) "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive." We know this verse to be true from experience, and yet it is something that we need to be reminded of frequently. Giving does not come naturally for everyone; however, most of us can testify to the joy we receive through being charitable. As mentors, we can reiterate to students how to sacrificially give of our time and finances through the many charitable opportunities that exist during this pandemic. Giving can also be something provided through sacrificial behavior. Some people may feel that wearing a face mask in public is unnecessary and burdensome, but it must be understood that others may be vulnerable and high-risk for infection. For some people, it may be an act of humility and sacrifice to put on a face mask but placing the needs of others before ourselves is a fundamental teaching of the Bible. We may desire to visit elderly relatives, but we should take all necessary precautions to ensure the health of vulnerable members of society – even if that means staying away from them. That being said, we also need to find creative ways to engage



with them and to ease anxiety and loneliness caused by the quarantine.

### God's Blessing During the COVID-19 Virus Pandemic

The devastation wrought by COVID-19 is horrific. As of the writing of this article, there has been approximately 7 million cases and over 500,000 deaths from COVID-19. The numbers are staggering. However, amid this pandemic and social distancing measures, the extra quality time that we've had with our students to teach pharmacy and share God's goodness in our lives is indeed a blessing from Him. As educators, God has provided us the opportunity to show our mettle in having to alter or customize our courses to meet the challenge of distance education. Regardless of what situations we face, we always need to remember what is written in Psalm 100:5 (KJV): "For the Lord is good; his

mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

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