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## CHRISTMAS 2021: WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD

### I'd like to thank . . .

This year *The BMJ* has asked doctors to share their words of thanks to those who have helped them through the pandemic. During what has been a difficult time, clinicians have been supported by their colleagues, families, friends, and others, **Abi Rimmer** reports

Abi Rimmer

Join our social media campaign on Twitter to thank those who have supported you through the pandemic by using the hashtag #bmjcovidthanks

#### Carrie MacEwen, acting chair of the General Medical Council

"There are so many people to be grateful to for getting us through the pandemic—within the medical profession and outside it. But what made the biggest difference to me, both professionally and personally, was the technology that allowed me to communicate with the world outside. So, my thanks go to all those who made video conferencing possible.

"Through this, I was able to continue as chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges from my home in Dundee, liaising with the colleges to contribute to the covid response by sharing intelligence.

"It also meant that, although much elective ophthalmology activity was paused, many of those patients who did request urgent care didn't have to risk coming into hospital unnecessarily, as they were managed through video consultation and community care.

"On a personal level, the pandemic hit at a particularly difficult time for my family, as I had just lost my father. Video conferencing meant that my mother (who moved in with us at the start of lockdown), my husband, and I were able to feel connected with loved ones from our living room in Dundee: my three children in Sydney, New York, and the south of England; my nephew who had just undergone a bone marrow transplant and was shielding; and my new granddaughter Millie, who I eventually got to meet in person six months later."

#### Matt Morgan, intensive care consultant

"Dear Letter Writer,

"On our pixelated planet, most wet ink dried long ago on letters written by hand and delivered by foot. Instead, keyboards are now hammered, phones swiped. But not by you.

"You scraped blackened ink onto heavy paper that felt like dried skin. You took the time to read, to write, to fold, to stick, to walk, to post. That letter dropped through my door and into my eyes just hours after they had dried from another salty tear-filled day caring for patients living and patients dying.

"You left no return address, expected nothing in return. We remain separate and apart but somehow close. Thank you, dear Letter Writer, for saying thank you. Thank you for saying it in ink, on paper, from your hands into mine.

Yours, Matt"

#### Jo Szram, consultant respiratory physician, Royal Brompton Hospital

"This Christmas, I would like to thank my fellow consultant respiratory physician and friend Alanna 'Allie' Hare. During the first covid-19 surge she was instrumental in mobilising medical teams in respiratory medicine at Royal Brompton Hospital—consultants, trainees, and fellows—reassuring us that we would manage what was coming.

"I've known Allie for many years, admiring her authentic, compassionate leadership approach—which really came to the fore during the pandemic response when the lung division was included in London's non-invasive ventilation (NIV) network. As a specialist in NIV, and the education and training lead for 'team lung,' Allie was called on in two ways—to manage the staffing available to us, and to ensure that NIV training and management was optimised—as well as working with patients herself, and supporting her family across several generations.

"Allie achieved this with her characteristic friendly yet efficient communication style, sharing information across networks respectful of all contributions regardless of formal hierarchy. I will always remember our evening phone conversations, discussing how to manage the concerns of our trainees and sharing our own worries about what was being asked of our colleagues. Thank you, Allie, for your friendship and support—you're amazing."

#### Win Sen Kuan, senior consultant, emergency medicine department, National University Hospital, Singapore

"When covid-19 arrived on Singapore's shores in January 2020, there was much uncertainty and little information to prepare our healthcare system for the incoming invisible enemy. It was during these unpredictable times that consultant emergency physician Ying Wei Yau rose to the challenge and became a stalwart clinician on whom we could rely.

"Ying Wei was frequently ahead of the curve in anticipating the pandemic trajectory, especially when

there was a dearth of local evidence during the early stages. She demonstrated poise and persistence in conveying her thoughts through logic and experience of working on the ground. She resolutely defended those opinions to other parties through the use of emerging evidence and real world findings, minimising inconvenience to patients and protecting staff from risk of transmission of disease. Implementation of some of these guidelines to the department and institution were ahead of national advisories, and subsequently proven to be correct, safe, and effective.

“Even in the current onslaught of covid-19 cases, she has been steadfast and clear in her thought processes, navigating us through a multitude of policy changes. Her ability to assimilate and distil vast amounts of information, and then to communicate these changes nimbly, promptly, and efficiently to all healthcare staff in the department is exemplary.

“I am very proud and grateful to have Ying Wei as my reliable colleague and trusted friend during these tumultuous two years.”

### **Fiona Donald, president of the Royal College of Anaesthetists**

“I thought long and hard about who I wanted to acknowledge for their hard work and dedication during the pandemic. Should it be the anaesthetists, including the many anaesthetists in training who stepped up and took on the challenge of learning new skills and upskilling others to help those most in need, often at huge expense to their personal and professional lives?

“Should it be the intensivists who took on the role as leaders, developing the skills of other specialties and working to deliver a well trained covid-19 treatment service? Should it be the doctors in pain medicine who were willingly redeployed when their practice was decimated? Or should it be the often forgotten wider team of healthcare workers working hard to support us and to keep other services running across the NHS?

“Ultimately, I couldn’t choose, so this message goes to them all. Words seem insufficient under the circumstances, but I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your work, your dedication, your professionalism, and your tenacity in the face of possibly the greatest challenge the NHS has ever seen.”

### **Mohammed Idris Shariff, consultant family medicine, Academy of Family Physicians of India**

“At the beginning of the pandemic, we at the Academy of Family Physicians of India (AFPI) were quick to come up with a plan for a chat service that could be accessed anywhere by anybody connected to the internet.

“Within no time [wefightcorona.in](http://wefightcorona.in)—a one-of-its-kind service—came up to speed and became a great resource of reliable information for ordinary people. We responded to about 2000 queries from across the world.

“The service included free access to a qualified family physician through a web chat service, where users could ask questions and get the latest evidence based information about the pandemic. The helpline operated from 7 am to midnight on all days of the week.

“Very often we would connect people to their local helpline for various lockdown services—medication delivery, local doctors for virtual consultations, ambulances, pharmacies, non-governmental organisations, and so on.

“I would like to thank the IT experts who were instrumental in getting the tool up and maintaining it. The chat was served and

supported by my able colleagues from all across AFPI, the team of Spice Route India, the medicos from Medical Students Association of India, and the entire AFPI Karnataka Chapter.”

### **Sam Everington, GP, Bromley By Bow Centre, London**

“East London has over 80 ethnic minority groups and had some of the highest death and injury rates from covid-19 in the country. This was complicated by one of our biggest challenges—persuading the most vulnerable groups to take up vaccination. Many find all this difficult to understand, but deprivation and inequality also drives distrust in establishments.

“Despite these challenges, our social prescribing team, local community volunteers, and the GP Care Group<sup>1</sup>—a social enterprise comprising every general practice in Tower Hamlets—were amazing and inspirational to all of us, with their sense of fun, friendship, compassion, and assumption that anything was possible.

“The social prescribing team produced a home pack for patients and tripled their consultations and support. Our volunteers and the team at the Bromley by Bow Centre set up a foodbank supported by Investec and our local Tesco which was part of a network serving one in a hundred families locally. The GP Care Group ran the covid vaccination centre with a managerial leadership that inspired all of us, working tirelessly, seven days a week. The leadership team—Chris Banks, Tracy Cannell, and Ruth Walters—are exceptional people, and deserve our special praise and thanks.”

1 GP Care Group. [www.gpcaregroup.org](http://www.gpcaregroup.org).