



LETTERS

POSSIBLE LESSONS FROM COVID-19

What will we learn from covid-19? That we live in an uncertain world

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Salisbury asks what we might learn from the covid-19 pandemic.¹ At times like this, we have to make it up as we go along. There isn't time to go through the hoops of obtaining official permission to change the way things are done. Just do it, then ask for absolution if necessary. We know that there are not enough doctors and nurses in the world to go around, so I expect that we will find new, realistic, and acceptable ways for providing good care with fewer staff.

Patients, society, management, and lawyers have become less tolerant of risk. How much certainty is required of responsible medical practice—90%, 95%, 99.5%? The cost of reducing

uncertainty can be high, for the health service and sometimes for patients. My own experience of VOMIT (victim of modern imaging technology) brought that home to me. I hope that covid-19 will help us accept that we live in an uncertain world.

Competing interests: None declared.

1 Salisbury H. Helen Salisbury: What might we learn from the covid-19 pandemic? *BMJ* 2020;368:m1087. 10.1136/bmj.m1087 32184276

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