It has been over a year, and the unforeseen consequences of the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak (COVID-19) continue to impact all domains of our lives. This global phenomenon has meant that medical professionals, students, and scientists have had to adapt to changes in policy, practice, and education to withstand challenging environments and uncertainty. In the face of the incomprehensible pain and suffering caused by COVID-19, we are humbled by the sacrifices made by all healthcare workers around the world, and together we must manifest their resilience and unity in order to guide the era of medicine beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Research efforts towards COVID-19 have been tremendous and the impact on the healthcare system has been profound. The contributions of the International Journal of Medical Students (IJMS) towards the growing scientific field of COVID-19 research have been twofold. IJMS has provided a platform for medical students to share their research, experiences, and training during these unprecedented times. IJMS has also helped to foster an interest in research at the student level by training new generations of editors and reviewers, and thus shaping the next generation of physician-scientists. While it is important to reflect on current events to better understand the situation at hand and prepare for the future, we need to remember that there is medicine beyond the pandemic. Although articles unrelated to COVID-19 seem to have moved out of the spotlight, they are more important than ever. We hope this issue of the IJMS can be a “passing of the baton” from COVID-19 centered experiences to a new era of excellence in research by medical students. We are grateful and humbled to be a space of reflection for many of our peers. Many have addressed the challenges of COVID-19-related inequities, difficulties in clinical placements due to the pandemic, and the importance of medical students during a pandemic is a reminder that although we need to remember that there is medicine beyond the pandemic. We learn of the importance of medical students to share their research, experiences, and training. The foundation of a strong patient-doctor relationship is based on the respect of a patient's background. Good communication skills are an important part of this, as seen in the experience of Jayawarden with a deaf patient. The experience by Rector et al. reinforces this by highlighting the importance of intercultural communication and describing their insights into Hispanic gender roles and culture. We are also positioned to appreciate the benefits of working and learning overseas and in remote locations, which can test the resilience of medical students especially if language or cultural barriers are involved. It is also great to see communication within the IJMS community. In this issue, we see the response of Yamamoto-Moreno to Patricio Garcia-Espinosa, a leader in neurology, reiterating the importance of hypertension awareness in controlling the risk of stroke in Mexico and elsewhere. Finally, in the experience article The Vigil of Medicine written by Kelly, she utilizes her hiking trip as an analogy of the journey of medicine, fraught with challenges of physical demands and mental exhaustion, which is also well described by Young. She brings all medical professionals together, be it a pandemic or not, to remind us we are never alone. The IJMS agrees with this underlying message of unity, and proves this by bringing together medical students from around the world to write this issue. It is a reminder that as medical students, junior doctors or senior consultants, we are never alone. Although COVID-19 has taken away our opportunities for clinical clerkships and in-person learning, it has given us an insight into the responsibilities that we will face in as future doctors. In the same way that exposure to stress in previous generations can trigger genetic changes that are passed down to children and grandchildren, the pandemic is a stark reminder that we will one day inherit the responsibilities of caring for the health of society. However, our genetic makeup also provides us the ability to heal from trauma and stress in multiple ways. The human body’s healing process replaces the damaged tissue with the same type as before, or, when it is unable to, forms a scar. Similarly, for some of us, there is no returning to the
training we had pre-pandemic, as we will be graduating and starting in the front-line work force. For others, the future of clinical training is less certain as teaching has shifted to online learning and some programs have been prolonged. As we progress, and recover, let this

References

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