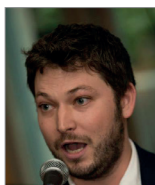


Hope is on the horizon



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We may well be entering the end game of the COVID-19 era with the wonderful news that a 90-year-old grandmother from the UK became the first person in the world to receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine (BBC News, 2020). Margaret Keenan received the inaugural dose of the vaccine at 06:31 GMT, which is proposed to be the first of as many as four million by the end of the year. The first to receive the jab are to be the over-80s and some health and care staff.

Ms Keenan declared: "I feel so privileged to be the first person vaccinated against COVID-19. It's the best early birthday present I could wish for because it means I can finally look forward to spending time with my family and friends in the new year after being on my own for most of the year." The second person in the world, and the first male, was the delightfully named William Shakespeare, aged 81. All's well that ends well, eh?

There are high hopes that this vaccine could spell the start of an unprecedented global immunisation effort, designed to direct the world towards a successful route out of a pandemic that has snatched more than 1.5 million lives. At its height, the pandemic not only saw widespread restrictions around the world, but there were large-scale changes to the way in which day-to-day practices took place in hospitals. Resources were redeployed to COVID wards and some wound care specialists found themselves working in community nursing teams. In addition, even dentists found themselves redeployed as district nurses, with wound care accounting for the lion's share of patient care (Sibanda and Muirhead, 2020).

The flexibility of wound care specialists around the globe has been something that everyone can be proud of. However, during the first wave of the pandemic, there was a problem with people not being willing to present in hospitals with a gamut of ailments, including pressure ulcers, leg ulcers and diabetic foot ulcers. Indeed, research by the US Center for Disease Control (CDC, 2020) found that an estimated 41% of adults in the US either delayed or avoided medical care as of June 30, 2020.

The importance of a vaccine cannot be overstated in the US, with the country's citizens actively encouraged to flout sensible COVID-19 measures by Donald Trump throughout 2020.

In December, deaths attributed to the pandemic in the US comfortably outstripped those of next highest, Brazil — 291,000 compared to 177,000 (Worldometers, 2020).

While a mass-produced vaccine will facilitate a return to something approaching normality, some of the lessons learned during the fight against coronavirus may well become cemented in future wound care best practice, such as pressure ulcer guidance when patients are lying in a prone position (National Pressure Injury Advisory Panel, 2020; NHS, 2020) and the role of telemedicine in wound management.

I don't think I am over-exaggerating when I say that 2021 cannot come soon enough. 2020 has been unsettling, depressing and scary in equal measure and the new COVID vaccine offers much-needed hope on the horizon. Here's wishing you all a lovely festive season and a happy new year. Stay safe, stay sane and look after each other.

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