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COVID-19 Pandemic: A Process of Recovery and Renewal.

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The impact of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the resultant COVID-19 Pandemic is all too familiar. The initial responses to the Pandemic focused on preventing transmission, effective treatment for those affected, maintenance of essential services and the development of a vaccine. Over 30 months on from the first recorded SARS-CoV-2 case in Wuhan, China there have been over 564 million people infected and sadly 6.37 million deaths[1]. Frequent reminders that we are not over the Pandemic are evident, in the United Kingdom (UK) data on infection and hospitalisation rates suggest that the UK is currently seeing its 7th wave of infections with further significantly increased infection numbers modelled to arrive in the UK in November 2022 and March 2023[2]. Similar patterns are also evident across Europe and the wider world[3]. Living with the Pandemic and the effects of the SARS-CoV-2 virus are now part of our daily lives.

Institutions and practitioners providing medical imaging and radiotherapy treatments have made significant adaptations to service delivery and practice to ensure healthcare continues to be delivered to try to avoid the perils of service closures that have and will inevitably lead to the backlogs in healthcare provision currently being experienced. This *Special Issue* of *Radiography* is dedicated to highlighting some of the initiatives and challenges that *Recovery* and *Renewal* from the COVID-19 Pandemic has generated for radiographers.

Recovery and *Renewal*, as we move through the COVID-19 Pandemic, continues to affect all aspects of the professional practice of radiographers. This includes education, clinical practice, professional issues and the health and wellbeing of our radiographic workforce. Thoughts on *Recovery* and *Renewal* would also not be complete without a focus on future pandemics. This latter point is worthy of further narrative and debate. Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic the term 'pandemic' would perhaps have remained an historical term in the lives of most radiographers. History has taught us that pandemics are more frequent and devasting that we are perhaps all able to comprehend. Since the early 1900s there have been nine global pandemics with three still on-going (cholera, Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome and COVID-19)[4]. Future pandemics are inevitable and thus a focal point of our professional recovery from COVID-19 must be our planning and preparedness for future pandemics.

Medical imaging is a key component of modern healthcare delivery and its role in future pandemics is likely to grow further. History is likely to show the enormous contribution that radiographers have played in the COVID-19 Pandemic and sadly this has not been without cost. Any *Special Issue* focusing on the *Recovery* and *Renewal* from COVID-19 must also acknowledge the loss of family, friends and colleagues to this dreadful disease. However, in acknowledging our history we should also remember that according to commentators we have already been operating within what could be termed a pandemic, as in the impacts of obesity and the ageing demographic of our global populations. Consequently, forward planning in response to healthcare demand through government documentation such as the Richards Report and 'Getting It Right First Time'[5, 6], demonstrated that for society to progress and face health issues there must be investment in equipment, staffing and their

education. Recent responses to the changing workforce through the College of Radiographers Education and Career Framework[7] as well as the notable direction change in expectations of standards from the UK Health and Care Professions Council[8], demonstrates that knowledge has built during this period and that the profession was already knocking on the door of change. Consequently, the many initiatives and data generated can and will contribute to the way diagnostic and therapeutic responses can change to meet demand.

Across the UK we are now seeing the impacts of initiatives that were started in response to the historical underlying demands placed on healthcare via imaging networks and academies[9, 10]. COVID-19 brought this to a head and demonstrated that we were on a very tenuous service trajectory and that the learning from the Pandemic must be incorporated into future activity. Despite investment, the ageing population and workforce pressures may mean the effects of the Pandemic extends many years into the future. We need to remain focused on this and use our learning to mitigate how the Pandemic will impact society and health provision, indicating that flexibility in our workforces across the service will need to be maintained and developed.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, radiographers continually demonstrated the very highest levels of professionalism and patient care. These qualities must continue as we move through and hopefully out of the Pandemic, though much work is still to be done. This is likely to be made more challenging from associated factors such as our growing population, rising demands for healthcare and climate change. Research studies presented within this *Special Issue* showcases the work of radiographers in supporting this aim to place COVID-19 firmly in our history books. Such studies encompass the full spectrum of radiographic practice, including diagnostic radiography, nuclear medicine, radiotherapy and our education sector.

Enormous growth in the submission of research articles to the journal was evident during the early period of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Such trends have largely continued, and it is fulfilling to know that as radiographers we are making in-depth contributions to our evidence. Many new initiatives were implemented during the Pandemic and many new responses to our journey through the Pandemic are on the horizon. It is important, as radiographers, that we make the necessary steps to evaluate and disseminate findings on these new approaches to healthcare and education. As Editors of this *Special Issue*, we look forward to reading about such endeavours in the coming years and in future editions of Radiography. We finish by offering our personal thanks, the thanks of our Profession and Patients for the work by all radiographers during the COVID-19 Pandemic. As a Profession we should remain incredibly proud of our achievements.

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