



May 2020 News

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### **FROM ONE MONTH TO THE NEXT**

April is a short month, but this year, with each day almost indistinguishable from the next, April seemed to melt away. Last month found us shocked and horrified by the rapid, lethal spread of SARS-CoV-2 and the way it overwhelmed hospitals and entire health care systems. New terms came into common parlance, including “flattening the curve,” a strategy devised not necessarily to keep more of us alive and healthy but to reduce the burden of providing health care for too many of us at once. In the United States, advice and instructions became controversial and, in some cases, contradictory. We were ordered to practice “social distancing,” which is a misnomer for “physical distancing.” We were told not to wear masks because they should be saved for health care workers. (We’ll never know many people spread the infection and increased the burden on health care workers by NOT wearing masks.) Then some governors ordered us to wear masks. Some of us were also ordered to “shelter in place,” more were simply told to stay home except for essential tasks. Our news outlets are reporting rebellions as people with “quarantine fatigue” occupy the centers of state government and public property in forbidden groups, often clad in guns and armor, to protest their perceived loss of freedom. Formerly ordinary event, like trips to the grocery store, where some essentials rapidly disappeared and others are rationed, have become fraught, and we have had to develop strategies for dealing with potential contamination on everything imported into the sanctuary of our homes. The problems of homelessness, of life in nursing homes, and of crowded prisons gained a new dimension as the virus magnified the risk of death in these already fragile environments.

In our state, the governor closed schools relatively early in the pandemic and recently used his family connections to purchase 500,000 tests from South Korea. He then arranged for the Korean delivery aircraft to land at our international airport, where members of Maryland’s National Guard and our State Police met its valuable payload and escorted it to a secret location. Other states, in contrast, are forcing people in non-essential positions to return to work despite the continued risk of infection or face a loss in state-paid unemployment benefits. This highlights the tension between protecting the economy and protecting lives that has vibrated through every decision taken by every public official starting in January (if not December).

This short summary of the ways our lives have changed would not be complete without noting that we all know people who have been infected and survived or died (we might not be aware of this yet). As we have reached out to far-flung friends making certain they are safe and well, we wonder how we would

have survived this pandemic without the Internet; yet many do not have access to this source of information and communication. We try to remember to be grateful for the things, like the Internet, like drawing a deep breath, that we have long taken for granted. And we eagerly gather and assess information about our invisible foe that, without definitive evidence, seems to strike hardest at men, people with type A blood, people with hypertension (or maybe only those taking an ACE-inhibitor), and older people (but the news continually celebrates a very elderly patient who survived). We have learned that the virus thickens the blood and can cause young adults to have strokes, that it can affect every organ in the body, and that it might have lasting adverse effects on survivors' health. We hope that survivors have immunity but learn of cases that might be relapses or might be new infections.

In the past month, we have watched scientific terms and tactics enter public discourse. We have seen models used for planning being criticized as having been over-reactions when their use led to fewer cases than otherwise would have occurred. We have seen uncontrolled studies support use of a drug that was then touted by the highest public official in our land as a potential cure (in the very American tradition of 19th-century salesmen traveling from town to town extolling snake oil as a cure-all from the back of a wagon). We have seen those claims replaced by musings about the ingestion of cleaning agents, and we have watched with interest as preliminary studies drew attention to another drug that might reduce time to "recovery" and mortality, as people put out calls over social media for survivor serum to inject as a treatment, as clinicians in California administer female sex hormones to men, and as researchers ponder the possible ability of live vaccines formerly used against polio and tuberculosis to reduce the potency of a COVID-19 infection. Most of all, we have noted all of the things that we don't know—why some cases are fatal and others are a mere annoyance chief among them.

As all of these changes have altered the trajectory of our lives and all of this information has swirled around us, we, like many others, have continued our work, mundane though it might seem. Thus, we have continued to collect and collate citations reports of studies that yielded primary data in our field, even as we know that many research projects have been halted, and most neuromodulation procedures have been delayed, leaving patients without the benefits of our therapy. With much of the work of writing, reviewing, and publishing research reports conducive to working from home, we have a new publication in this month's SCS list, another paper submitted to a journal for review, and Dr. North has a third about to be submitted. In the face of so much tragedy, we can only hold on to the normalcy of our modest contributions as our way of saying that life will go on, patients will continue to benefit from neuromodulation therapies, and we will emerge from this in a new world with, we hope, a more generally sophisticated understanding of basic scientific concepts, strengthened health care systems, and a renewed appreciation for the heroism of our doctors, nurses, and other first responders as well as the too-often formerly undervalued people whose everyday work provides all of us with daily essentials.

## **MAY 2020 STATISTICS**

### **Membership**

In April, the number of our subscribers grew to 1223. Thank you for helping to spread the word!

### **Number of citations in each section**

- DBS 5425, with 2 completed WIKISTIM abstracts
- DRG 127, with 9 completed WIKISTIM abstracts
- GES 497
- PNS 59 (limited to peripheral nerve field stimulation)
- SCS 2489 with 131 completed or partially completed WIKISTIM abstracts
- SNS 1001

## CITATIONS ADDED FROM SEARCH ON APRIL 28, 2020

The list of citations that received the most-clicks in previous newsletters follows this citation list.

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