

**LETTER FROM
THE EDITOR**



**Philip J. Addis, MSc, FAS,
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Dear Colleagues,

Plastination and the Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

The worldwide pandemic and resulting interruption of face-to-face teaching have forced education establishments to adopt new and innovative methods to continue delivering their curricula. This has been especially challenging in healthcare programs, where hands-on teaching of clinical skills and anatomy form such an important part of the syllabus. The obstacles that this has thrown up, and the ways that Higher Education establishments have tackled them, is a rich area for educational research, and several studies relating to medical education have already been published (e.g., Brassett et al., 2020; Longhurst et al., 2020; Flynn et al., 2021; Scully et al., 2021).

In my own institution, St George's, University of London, all face-to-face anatomy teaching was suspended in March 2020, and (apart from a small number of small-group teaching sessions) has not yet resumed. Academic staff quickly had to learn new skills (as well as a new vocabulary!) in delivering 'blended learning', in which on-line resources played a central part. We chose to deliver a mixture of pre-recorded ('asynchronous') lectures (which had to be 'chunked' into short segments) with live ('synchronous') interactive Q & A sessions, on-line revision quizzes, an 'FAQ' web page, and various other resources, including "Complete Anatomy" (3D4Medical, Elsevier), an on-line 3D CAL Anatomy package.

Perhaps the most important, and challenging, resource to create for our students, has been the pre-recorded Dissecting Room anatomy videos. Describing and demonstrating anatomical structures in a clear and meaningful way on video is not as easy as it sounds, as anyone who has attempted it will attest. Having access to high-quality pre-dissected anatomical specimens is, of course, essential, and in this case, plastinated specimens were especially useful. So useful, indeed, that some institutions may be considering a permanent switch to plastinated specimens. There is currently a lively debate regarding the future use of the extensive library of on-line and pre-recorded anatomy education resources that have been created, and the extent to which they should be utilized in the future. At St George's, we have seen that it is possible to continue anatomical education without access to the Dissecting Room (though to what level remains to be seen), and there are some who see this as the way forward in the future, although the consensus in the UK seems to be that these new resources should supplement, and not replace, more traditional, cadaver-based anatomy teaching.

Whatever route is chosen by higher education establishments, it seems certain that plastinated specimens will have an important part to play in the future of anatomical education in the UK and worldwide.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip J. Addis". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Philip J Addis
Editor-in-Chief