

INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE AGAINST EPILEPSY

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

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Dear Colleagues and Friends,

The COVID-19 Pandemic is affecting all of us, regardless of where we are or what we do. On behalf of the ILAE I would like to acknowledge the tremendous work of epilepsy professionals around the world during these challenging times.

Professionals in epilepsy, like most health professionals, are under substantial strain on many fronts. As clinicians, we are called to deliver care under difficult circumstances and often with limited or insufficient resources. As researchers, our clinical and basic research facilities are on lock down and programs are halted. Face to face education is on hold and we are coping with new virtual methods to deliver lectures and exams. As health administrators, we are under pressure to re-deploy resources and deal with preventative and emergency measures that change from day to day. As leaders and experts we are called to be the voice of reason amidst growing anxiety and fear. Not least, we must care for our own well-being and that of our families.

As a community that promotes health, I encourage all of us to heed and promote the public health recommendations for the containment of COVID-19, published by local and international public health agencies such as the World Health Organization, and their excellent materials <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>.

As a community that promotes education, we are fortunate to have invested heavily on distance education programs and are almost ready to launch the ILAE Academy virtual education programme. This is a timely offering in times of restricted opportunities for face-to-face learning.

Until now, there is no evidence of a direct effect of COVID-19 on seizures or epilepsy. However, patients may experience worsening of seizures due to systemic illnesses, drug interactions, decreased access to antiseizure medications and increased stress. People with epilepsy require

appropriate counselling and attention in these areas. If you have important information to share about management of people with epilepsy in relation to COVID-19, email us at covid@ilae.org. We will also be posting relevant information in the ILAE website at www.ilae.org

The COVID-19 Pandemic is also affecting the League's programs and resources on a large scale. Our sources of revenue have been severely affected and there is much uncertainty about finances. Accordingly, **new expenditures and financial commitments by the League's Commissions and Task Forces are on hold**. Similarly, our operational expenditures are being limited to essential services. Most importantly, our ability to travel and hold meetings and congresses has been severely curtailed. After extensive consultation with the ILAE Regional Chairs, Congress Chairs, the International Bureau for Epilepsy and our Congress Office, the **ILAE Executive has decided to postpone until 2021 North American, Latin American and European Regional Congresses, and to postpone the International Epilepsy Congress until 2022**. We will be posting additional information in the next few days.

I understand the disappointment that comes with cancelling events to which we have devoted our best efforts. I also understand the frustration created by the uncertainty and by trying to make plans when the ground under our feet is shifting continuously. However, I am confident that together we will be able navigate these difficult times and that we will emerge stronger.

I wish all of us good health and good spirits.



Samuel Wiebe
ILAE President