While the term “social distancing” is likely to make every Words of the Year list for 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp relief just how closely connected and interdependent we really are. Industries and jobs that many of us took for granted are being recognized as essential to the health and wellbeing of a functioning society. For every disheartening story we hear about toilet paper hoarding or so-called “coronavirus parties” being held in defiance of social distancing orders, we hear several uplifting stories about regular people demonstrating courage and compassion to help ease the suffering of fellow citizens and slow the virus’ spread.

Breweries and distilleries forced to shut down by stay-at-home directives are producing hand sanitizer and giving it away to individuals and institutions in need. Engineers are 3D printing respirator valves for free, so hospitals don’t run out [1]. Companies from a range of industries are donating hundreds of thousands of scarce N95 masks to states and local hospitals. And at USC’s Keck School of Medicine, more than 50 surgical residents volunteered for training in essential critical-care nursing skills to help meet the anticipated overwhelming demand for intensive-care nurses [2].

Naturally, the pharmaceutical industry is central to the fight against COVID-19. According to the World Health Organization, two vaccine candidates are already in clinical evaluation and 48 more are in preclinical evaluation [3]. Also, at least a dozen potential therapies are currently being tested [4]. Meanwhile, pharma companies and their suppliers are working tirelessly to ensure both employee safety and the ongoing availability of critical medicines.

At Tablets & Capsules, we’ve adjusted our digital strategy to help our partners reach potential clients in the absence of trade shows, conferences, and face-to-face meetings. We’ve also been promoting companies’ COVID-19 messages and humanitarian efforts through our social media outlets and have made T&C magazine available in its entirety on our website so readers can access our current issue wherever they are.

Unsurprisingly, a few unscrupulous actors are attempting to take advantage of our fear and uncertainty by marketing unproven and illegal coronavirus treatments, vaccines, and tests. The FDA has issued a warning to consumers about such fraudulent products, which can be ineffective at best and seriously harmful or fatal at worst [5]. If sunlight really is the best disinfectant, then consumer education and awareness may be our best protections against this type of activity.

Public health officials will no doubt learn numerous lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, and politicians and the general public will likely forget many of these lessons once this crisis has ended. But COVID-19 has already been so disruptive to so many that it will certainly alter the way we do business and healthcare in the future. For example, India recently announced that it will invest $1.3 billion to encourage domestic production of active pharmaceutical ingredients and reduce the country's reliance on Chinese imports [6].

This initiative is likely a sound response to the supply-chain disruptions India experienced as a result of China’s aggressive coronavirus lockdown orders. However, countries isolating their supply chains from their neighbors won’t eliminate all of our problems or prevent future pandemics.

As I write this letter from my improvised home office, with the rest of the T&C staff also working from their homes around Minnesota and beyond, we understand that our temporary isolation is necessary to slow the spread of coronavirus. But we also recognize that we can only continue to be of service and produce T&C by remaining connected with each other, with our contributors and industry partners, and with the larger pharma community. T&C

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