

In 1969 man landed on the moon, how can we also eradicate COVID-19?

To the Editor,

On July 20, 1969, American astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first person to land on the moon, with the Apollo 11 spacecraft. Armstrong reached the surface of the moon with Edwin Buzz Aldrin and module-pilot Michael Collins. Upon landing, Armstrong's first words were: "That is one small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind." Thereafter, Armstrong and Aldrin walked for 3 hours on the surface of the moon.¹ They were wearing protective spacesuits with a life support unit. The spacesuits were to protect them from the extreme cold of space and high-energy rays and particles. The suits also maintained the balance of pressure and provided both oxygen and water, as well as a power supply and communication systems. This event was an important achievement for space exploration, and it was also very important to the development of many communication tools in use today.

The Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) is a viral infectious disease that originated in China and has now been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization.² Although COVID-19 usually starts with symptoms such as cough and high fever, it often worsens into severe pneumonia. When symptoms become life-threatening, many patients are transferred to intensive care units (ICU) where they are administered oxygen using ventilators. Due to the highly contagious properties of COVID-19, health care professionals provide treatment and care with special equipment. In fact, the protective clothing worn by nurses and doctors working in intensive care units resembles that of an astronaut. These include protective trousers, long gloves, waterproof long-sleeved gowns, medical masks, N95/FFP2 or N99/FFP3 masks, face protectors and glasses.²

Many patients infected with COVID-19 develop respiratory failure rapidly and are then admitted to ICU where they are treated to maintain breathing and to prevent organ failure. This is done by intubation. During this time, patients are often left alone while nurses care for them, and communication with family members and others is prohibited. In addition, some procedures performed on patients can be very traumatizing. Therefore, it is important for medical personnel to be aware of the traumas experienced, although the obvious purpose of treatment and care is to sustain life. Nevertheless, patients may feel lonely and distrustful of nurses and doctors due to the extra professional equipment and overalls and glasses they wear to treat patients. Patients' unease and uncertainty are also likely to be compounded by the several layers of gloves worn by medical personnel. These may create a perception of artificiality when touching the patient during certain procedures. Furthermore, the

unpredictability of COVID-19 regarding symptoms and treatment of the disease may exacerbate a patient's fear of death and thus inhibit appropriate treatment by the medical professional team.³ Although COVID-19 is a viral disease, the care of this disease should also include psychiatric care due to the negative effects it creates on patients and society. This psychiatric care should include protecting the patient and family from trauma, reducing anxiety levels, and increasing their belief that they will overcome the disease.⁴ Thus, psychiatric care provided to patients infected with COVID-19 may prevent psychiatric disorders and strengthen the immune system by reducing stress.

COVID-19 has created many challenges. Its sudden appearance has prompted a world-wide effort to fight an unseen enemy. In the meantime, health care professionals are utilizing their knowledge and expertise to heal and discharge COVID-19 patients, when appropriate, from the ICU to their homes. Success stories in the struggle against this very contagious virus do exist, but as already noted, we are dealing with an unseen enemy. Even asymptomatic individuals can transmit this virus to others unknowingly. In some ways, this uncertainty and lack of knowledge about what is to come remind us of Armstrong taking a huge risk to be the first person to land on the moon. The belief and motivation needed to land on the moon was a team effort. NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) estimated that more than four-hundred engineers, scientists, and technicians worked to accomplish the moon landings.⁵ Indeed, it has become very clear that the war against COVID-19 also requires an immense and dedicated world team effort by all countries under the leadership of the WHO and the United Nations. This effort is reminiscent of Armstrong's and Aldrin's first moon landing of 1969 where much of the world became united in a feeling of brotherhood and our common humanity and sacrifice in this achievement. The struggle against the formidable COVID-19 virus has shown that, just like those who worked together to make the moon landing of 1969 a reality, the entire world is needed in the fight against this deadly scourge.

Armstrong and Aldrin knew that if the space mission did not go as planned, their situation was a matter of life and death. In the same way, when the health care workers enter the ICU, which is infected with COVID-19, they must take the necessary protective measures to be safe. They know that the slightest mistake can cause them and the people around them to become infected with the disease. Just as Armstrong and Aldrin's moon landing had a specific goal in the service of humankind, today's health care professionals are also united in similar ways. They devote themselves every day to the care of all lives in the fight against this very threatening world emergency, COVID-19. It has

become clear that the individual and psychological characteristics of health care professionals such as motivation, goal setting, desire to succeed, concentration, altruism, and self-confidence are effective in this fight.

Armstrong and those thousands of people who worked together to achieve the moon landing taught all of us that great goals can be achieved when working together as a team. The moon landing united people from all over the world by mobilizing universal emotions of pride and great achievement. Therefore, the way to win the war with COVID-19 is to be united in a team effort, to work together with the world's researchers and scientists to develop effective testing and a vaccine that will protect future generations to come. When that day comes, we will again feel, as we did with the moon landing, united and proud of what can be accomplished with teamwork, cooperation, and motivation with all peoples of the world.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflict of interests.

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