

## The changing landscape of hepatology and gastroenterology

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The world is changing... the landscape of gastroenterology and hepatology too.

First, scientific knowledge is evolving. The complex mechanisms that explain liver and digestive diseases are becoming better and better characterized. In the previous issue of *Acta Gastro-Enterologica Belgica*, for example, we discovered the role of angiogenesis in non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (1), one of the most common liver diseases (2) without drug treatment available to date (3). In another interesting manuscript of this issue, the molecular characterization of hepatocellular carcinoma (or rather hepatocellular carcinomas) was summarized (4), suggesting therapeutic interventions tailored to individual patient's profile in the future. In this issue, in the same vein, you will discover original manuscripts evaluating genetic virulence factors of *Helicobacter pylori* leading to specific gastro-intestinal manifestations (5), non-invasive tests that now frequently supplant liver biopsy in the context of chronic viral hepatitis B (6) as well as a case report on a rare digestive toxicity of immunotherapy (7).

Second, the recent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has had a profound impact on our daily gastroenterological practice, leading to a rapid change in clinical appointments and diagnostic/therapeutic tools. The public health emergency has led to the development of guidelines. We were delighted to be able to publish Belgian recommendations in the field of liver transplantation (8) and gastroenterology (9). Initially, only urgent examinations and consultations were maintained, raising the question of the urgency of some procedures (10). We also faced digestive and hepatic manifestations of the disease. A well conducted meta-analysis is published in this issue (11), written by Italian hepatologists who were confronted before us with the emergence of the epidemic.

Thirdly, medical relationships are evolving. Not only have telephone consultations been favored during this epidemic, but traditional meetings between colleagues and on-site congresses have disappeared (temporarily?), giving way to e-meetings such as "The Liver Meeting Digital Experience" or the "United European Gastroenterology Week Virtual".

In this context, it seems essential to preserve our human, medical and scientific values. Many people may feel helpless in the face of the complexity of the diagnostic means and treatment options illustrated in the first paragraph. The containment measures and physical distancing imposed by the COVID-19 outbreak mentioned in the second paragraph are responsible for psychological disorders (12), serious functional decline (13) or delays in the care of some patients (14). Easy, greener and practical at first glance, our new mode of communication presented in the third paragraph also has major weaknesses. The social and physical distancing as well as the impersonal nature of the virtual meetings can of course also be discouraging.

May this new issue of our Journal *Acta Gastro-Enterologica Belgica* help us to maintain our knowledge, share recent information in a traditional but also contemporary way (with open-access now available (15)) and to question ourselves about the recent events. This issue is particularly rich in quality review manuscripts on a variety of topics such as the treatment of esophageal strictures (16), appendicular cancer (17), chronic diarrhea (18) or pre-operative assessment of the cirrhotic patient (19). We wish you a pleasant reading.

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