

1 **Title:** COVID-19: Not a Positive Test Result, but a Positive Outlook

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- 31 • Positive spin on a negative subject
- 32 • Turning the page: COVID edition
- 33 • Looking for the light in a whirlwind of despair
- 34 • The Fauci-effect
- 35 • Increasing medical school admission rates in the United States

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42 **THE EXPERIENCE.**

43 The year 2020 has been nothing short of terrible, leaving society in a state of quandary successfully putting  
44 a foothold for many years to come. Indeed, it is no secret that the world has been anticipating the end of a  
45 treacherous year, so as the year 2021 commences, collectively we as a people have welcomed this New  
46 Year with higher hopes and optimism like never before.<sup>1</sup> The series of events that occurred in 2020 - a  
47 nerve-racking United States Presidential election and intense wildfires in Australia to name a few, while  
48 egregious on their own accord, seemingly appear minute compared to the worst of all: SARS-COVID-19.<sup>2</sup>  
49 The RNA virus that stood out amongst its own kind led to a worldwide shut down leaving millions without  
50 work and a means for survival.<sup>3</sup> Despite what seems like a scene from the movie Contagion, 2020 was not  
51 without silver linings. You just had to really look for it.

52  
53 “Now more than ever we need your talent, your energy, your resolve and your character” said Dr. Fauci to  
54 new medical graduates at the height of the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Fauci’s words encapsulated a nation-wide push  
55 for more physicians and healthcare workers to assist on the frontlines as we battled a virus that was truly  
56 unprecedented. As a result, medical school applications have risen nearly 18% which is truly uncharted  
57 territory.<sup>4</sup> I think that the spike in medical school applications can be seen as a diamond in the rough,  
58 metaphorically representing a positive outcome from the COVID pandemic. It is easy to focus on what was  
59 lost during this year, but I think we should have high hopes for the future as well, as people have been  
60 inspired and motivated to learn more about medicine and contribute to the overall health of society with the  
61 intentions to prevent a COVID-type situation from ever catching us flat-footed again in our lifetime.

62 It was a year to reconnect with things that we lost over time. All over social media, families and friends stuck  
63 in quarantine together used this time to escape to the kitchen and subsequently turned it into a bakery.  
64 There were stories that, despite not making the front page, warmed the hearts of millions - “Quarantine  
65 saved my marriage.” Once a lost form of communication, especially among the millennial generation, phone  
66 calls became prevalent again, and with the help of Zoom, virtual “drinking” ensued. Moreover, as a society  
67 we began to utilize and focus on what we had rather than delve into what we want. Some would argue that  
68 we had no choice, but I believe this was a prime example of humanity demonstrating resilience and  
69 adaptability in the face of adversity. Board games and puzzles allowed us to channel our inner-childhood  
70 again, while kettle bells and tension bands kept our mind-body connection tethered just long enough to  
71 outlast a nation-wide shutdown. Once the world completely opens up its arms to society again, it will be  
72 interesting to see how people readjust to the ‘new normal’. Some may feel reluctant to assimilate back into  
73 old patterns and the old way of life, for fear of COVID, but perhaps the majority of people will re-enter society  
74 with a new appreciation of life and society instead. Importantly, COVID-19 appeared to have directly caused  
75 a reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.<sup>5</sup> With fewer cars on the roads and people working from home, there is less  
76 traffic congestion which resulted in an 8.8% drop in global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions when compared to the same  
77 period in 2019.<sup>5</sup> It is no surprise that when the world opens up its arms to society again that our interests

78 will likely shift back to what consumed our former minds but it is also encouraging to hope that perhaps we  
79 can see people play chess in parks again.

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81 The devastating losses we have endured this year will forever leave a hole in all of our hearts. The racial  
82 injustice we are continuing to face rages on. However, 2020 has left us with room to breathe - we can now  
83 as a society strive for everlasting change for the better. We have left exposed the neglect in others' culture  
84 and ways of life and in doing so have been able to make strides towards inclusion and unification rather  
85 than disassembly. Xenophobia against Asian Americans as a direct consequence of COVID-19 was at an  
86 all-time high.<sup>6,7</sup> In spite of this, *Parasite*, won the Oscar for best picture – a first for an international and  
87 Korean film. The Bangtan Sonyeondan (BTS) craze continued globally and managed to be featured as  
88 Time Magazine's 2020 Entertainer of the Year.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, history was made when the United States saw  
89 its first woman of color and Asian American Vice President, Kamala Harris, elected in the midst of the Black  
90 Lives Matter (BLM) protest". Collectively, we have marched the streets for a singular movement to combat  
91 racial and LGBTQ discrimination in hopes for a better future for all; and in May 2020 Crayola announced  
92 its release of a new set of crayons that will allow children to better reflect the world. Despite COVID placing  
93 the spotlight on the atrocities that are still prevalent in today's society, we must ride the momentum of the  
94 major movements for racial and LGBTQ justice through 2021, and beyond, as we strive towards a better  
95 world.

96

97 Needless to say, 2020 was a whirlwind and will likely have its own chapter dedicated to history books in the  
98 years to come. But despite it all, 2020 wasn't so much as checking things off a bucket list or booking 'x'  
99 amount of trips. Rather, it was a year to truly count our blessings and find value in simple things; baking  
100 banana bread, connecting with friends and family, and being fully present realizing how short life really is.  
101 It was a year to be grateful for all we have and knowing that that was simply enough. It was also a year that  
102 may serve as a catapult into a more progressive, accepting, and promising world for medicine and  
103 humankind alike. 2020 has not been easy, so remember to thank yourself for making it this far.

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