

Movember in a pandemic - it matters, more than ever

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Dear Editor,

in recent years there has been an increase in the number of new cases of cancer. This increase, in part, is closely related to the increase in average life expectancy, as well as more accurate diagnostic techniques and well-defined screening programs.

Nowadays, the world faces a new challenge, a pandemic, an outbreak of a new beta-coronavirus. WHO has declared the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19), caused by SARS-CoV-2, an international public health emergency. Given the unprecedented situation of the pandemic, those programs may begin to slow down.

Movember is the leading charity changing the face of men's health on a global scale, focusing on mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer and testicular cancer.

Commenced in 2003 with the dual aims of raising funds and awareness of prostate cancer and mental health, incorporating testicular cancer and physical inactivity in recent years, the term was created from the combination of "Mo" – Australian slang for mustache – and November.

The strength of the Movember campaign is in its fundraising capacities. To date, has raised millions and funded over thousands programmes worldwide.

The campaign makes outstanding use of social media with accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, but most of their marketing focus on encouraging men to grow facial hair. With a trademark combination of humor, companionship, and competitive nature they managed to do the seemingly impossible: turn huge numbers of men into energetic fundraisers, much as women do for breast cancer.

Movember in a pandemic - does it matters?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by the novel coronavirus severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) and first emerged in December 2019 in Wuhan, Hubei province, China.

Since then, the virus has rapidly spread to many countries with a daily increase in the number of confirmed cases and infection-related deaths. COVID-19 morbidity and mortality has been associated with factors such as age and comorbidities.

Infection in frail patients assumes a worse prognosis, resulting more often in hospitalization, admission to intensive care units with a consequent need for invasive mechanical ventilation. Among these, cancer patients represent a large subgroup with a high risk of developing infection associated with coronavirus and, consequently, serious complications.

The challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic required an enormous effort to adapt and reorganize medical services. The consequent internal restructuring to respond to the new demands determined by COVID-19 had to be done simultaneously taking care of people and working as a team, focusing on identifying the most appropriate solutions at all times for the different contexts of the dynamics.

The question of how to organize the screening programs during the COVID-19 pandemic is crucial

It is indisputable to join efforts to fight the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, but let us not agree that the virus contaminates our national health system.

The Emergency Committee of the *World Health Organization* (WHO) anticipated that the COVID-19 pandemic will last a long time and, therefore, it is necessary to continue efforts to contain it worldwide.

The challenges are immense, but there are lives beyond COVID-19 that need to be taken on account.

By this we mean that the pandemic caused by COVID-19 has not made the illnesses of these potential patients disappear, who continue to need our attention and care. If, on the one hand, it is more than clear that we should be aware that with the current pandemic situation it is impossible to maintain all normal activity and simultaneously treat COVID-19 patients; on the other hand, we cannot ignore the remaining problems in our health system in addition to this virus.

"The pandemic is a health crisis that occurs once in a century and its effects will be felt in the decades to come," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

These effects are valid for both Covid and non-Covid patients. So, the answer to whether the Movember movement makes sense in times as troubled as those we currently live in, our answer is a categorical yes.

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