

Leading with Science

~~My life was well organized in January 2020~~~~in January 2020 my life was very well organized~~, if not a little hectic due to newly expanded job responsibilities – adding medical affairs and market access to my already busy job. Travels, a few strategic projects, change management, and a new marketing strategy process kept me occupied. ~~In my personal life, I continued complaining to my husband that I don't see him often enough~~~~continued complaining to my husband that I did not see him often enough in my personal life~~, and I tried to talk to my elderly parents in Poland at least once a week. My weekends were filled with hiking and nature photography and reading about Japan history to better understand the culture of Terumo, our parent company. I had a ~~very busy~~~~hectic~~, but stable and fulfilled life, which seems so distant now.

My awareness about the pandemic grew slowly. I was always tuned to health news and noticed ~~the~~ first media reports about the new respiratory virus in China sometime in early January. Viruses jump from animals to humans ~~all the~~ time, so it ~~didn't~~~~did not~~ register as anything out of ~~the~~ ordinary. Then ~~human to human~~~~human-to-human~~ transmission was confirmed, ~~but though~~ the number of cases was still ~~small~~~~low~~. At that time, it felt like ~~it would be similar to~~ previous SARS and MERS epidemics, with rather regional spread, which were scary but finally relatively easy to contain. Nothing to worry about in ~~the a~~ world full of ~~germs~~~~microbes~~. The United States felt safe and far away from the problem.

My trip to Japan in mid-January was ~~interesting and uneventful~~, and I came back just before Wuhan was locked down on January 23rd. I was still watching ~~the evolving situation in China~~~~China's evolving situation~~ like a sci-fi movie, unreal and in a galaxy far, far away. ~~And then~~~~Then~~ first papers were published about the virus transmissibility and the severity of symptoms, and extremely high age-related mortality rate. These were early red flags that indicated that the new disease was much more infectious and ~~serious~~~~severe~~ than ~~the~~ flu, which kills 290,000 – 600,000 people every year. Then outbreaks occurred on a few cruise ships and in Italy, and news came from ~~the Center for Disease Control and Prevention~~ ~~(CDC)~~ that their tests were faulty, so they only tested a few hundred people in February. At that moment, I knew that 2020 would be a rough year and that we may have lost our first battle with the virus in the United States. The community spread was already occurring, and we missed the opportunity to contain the epidemic at the early stages of single cases and small clusters. My ~~level of~~ anxiety increased, and I cancelled the Caribbean cruise, which ~~I and my husband~~~~my husband and I were planning~~~~planned~~ in late March. Three weeks later, the cruise industry put all cruises on hold.

~~At the company level, we were already mapping our supply routes~~~~We were already mapping our supply routes at the company level~~, refreshing business continuity procedures, and responding to customers' requests for more inventory. At that time, I oversaw corporate communications, among other responsibilities, and had ~~an~~ extensive experience in crisis management from my previous work in the pharma and vaccine industry—~~so~~, ~~it~~ became my job to lead the crisis response team. Our company realized that we ~~must~~~~needed to~~ act quickly to protect our associates (the company's employees) from the coronavirus, as there was already more community spread than detected by testing, which continued to be in short supply. Fortunately, as a medical device company, we had a small group of physicians and scientists who could sort through emerging science and ~~help to~~ design new ways of working, even before the public health authorities in Colorado issued ~~a~~ ~~s~~Stay-at-h~~h~~Home order. In retrospect, turning to science was the best decision ~~that~~ we made at the beginning of the pandemic. We followed the official public health recommendations, ~~but also~~~~and~~ were able to adjust them to our specific situation, especially protecting associates who ~~couldn't~~~~could not~~ work from home.

Commented [PRM1]: Contrasting ideas. Did you mean: interesting but uneventful? Uninteresting and uneventful? Interesting and eventful?

As a medical device manufacturer, our obligation is to continue production and ensure that our products reach customers without delay, as they were needed for various treatments and blood donations around the world. Manufacturing associates, engineers developing new devices and scientists conducting laboratory studies were unable to work from home, so we had to create a safe environment ~~for them that would keep them safe~~.