Viral Times Call For a Dogged Response

This month brings an odd Editor-in-Chief Pick of the Month (EIC POTM). Based upon a process independent of myself, AEM had chosen a paper as the POTM that I authored Randomized Trial of Therapy Dogs Versus Deliberative Coloring (Art Therapy) to Reduce Stress in Emergency Medicine Providers. Another editor had planned to write the POTM piece for my paper, but shortly after that decision, the COVID-19 epidemic hit like that snowstorm of the century that blows all the elves and boxes around on Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer every Christmas. That editor has become subsumed with clinical shifts and mired in COVID-related administrative work. The recentness and rapidity of this storm, coupled with requirements for press releases and podcasts, precluded reordering the lineup. Therefore, I am in the unusual position of writing about my own paper, as well as about other highlights from the April issue. Regarding the latter, the COVID storm also blew in several papers from the Far East that provide crucial and illuminating information. AEM convened a COVID task force to expedite their rapid review and revision. One highlight is the special contribution by Ma et al, Emergency Management of the Prevention and Control of Novel Coronavirus Pneumonia in Specialized Branches of Hospital that provides a stepwise plan for hospital response to the coronavirus epidemic. This special contribution has been available on early view for one month, and is accompanied by an invited commentary by psychological stress expert Sam McLean: A Critical COVID Metric: Your ED Staff Infection Rate. And when it comes to stressful times, I submit that the stars of our paper can help. In the past weeks, have you seen the dogged response? I have seen it multiple times, on COVID-related Zoom meetings, where folks on video brought their dogs onto their laps, causing the entire focus of the meeting to switch to the dogs. People generally like dogs. They provide a welcome distraction. Through a neural mechanism that appears to involve the amygdala, dogs relieve stress, provide comfort, and unconditional affection. If you have a dog, go give him or her a hug. You'll both like it. If you don't have a dog, they are easy to adopt.

Best wishes,
Jeffrey A. Kline, MD
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