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## **COVID-19: Thoughts from the Community**

BMC Cancer Editorial Board Member, Luigi Marano, shares his experience of how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected his research and editorial activities.



[Luigi Marano](#)

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The World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020, has declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a global pandemic. Actually, Italy represents one of the world's centre of active coronavirus cases with more than 205,000 infected people in the Country (including at least 10,000 health-care workers) and more than 30,000 deaths.

On March 11, 2020, the Italian government approved the decree to lockdown Italy, in response to what **Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte** called “*the country’s most difficult crisis since the Second World War*”. The closure of all schools and universities nationwide was already ordered a few days earlier. The decree absolutely avoided any unnecessary movements out of home, permitting travel only for emergencies or proven working needs. Furthermore, all commercial and retail businesses except those providing essential services, like grocery stores, food stores, and pharmacies, closed down. Additionally, all organized events were also suspended, as well as events in public or private places, including those of a cultural, recreational, sporting and religious nature, even if held in closed places.

Everything occurred suddenly over a few days, but my institution’s safety and maintenance units have been brilliant and timely. Since the beginning of the interruption of all activities in Italian universities, an effective response team, as well as appropriate online platforms were prepared. Furthermore, the Rector of the University of Siena, **Professor Francesco Frati**, has quickly communicated updates on the lockdown by e-mail, and passed on information on how teaching and research activities would change, switching to e-learning methods whenever possible. “*All together we will succeed, but now we need that everybody strictly follows the indications of the scientific authorities and the government provisions: stay at home, limit interpersonal contacts and maintain social distancing*”, he said in a statement.

As assistant professor of surgery, I haven't stopped working during the lockdown, with the necessary precautions. I just streamed lessons from my office and connected virtually with medical students and surgical residents who were not there personally. At the beginning, it seemed impossible but if an organization has good managers who can plan well and has good staff who can work hard, it can be done. On the other hand, as a surgical oncologist I was involved in the reorganization and planning of cancer patient surgical management. *"There is not only COVID-19; all other pathologies cannot wait"*, said my mentor, the director of Surgical Oncology Department, **Professor Franco Roviello**. The request for intensive care facilities for respiratory support has been exaggerated and the Italian hospitals have modified the architecture both technical and functional. The domino effect has beat down also on oncologic patients requiring surgery with surgeons faced with the choice of whether to perform an operation or wait for the end of the outbreak. As a gastrointestinal surgical oncologist, I have worked without rest in surgical theatre as well as at a patient's bed. Additionally, I have been constantly updated about relevant medical literature concerning COVID-19 trying to balance the need for unprecedented extraordinary restriction measures and the guarantee of good clinical practice. To this address, I collaborated in the SUR-ON-COVID-19 Working Group to draft practical recommendations at the national level about the Surgical Management of Oncologic Patient during the COVID-19 Outbreak on behalf of Italian Society of Surgical Oncology. I also wrote the brief article "Cancer care under the outbreak of COVID-19: a perspective from Italian tertiary referral centre for surgical oncology" published in the European Journal of Surgical Oncology.

Despite the lockdown, my working activity has definitely increased, and I was voluntarily taking on an extra job to fulfill my oath as a doctor. After surgery, I usually spent at least three hours daily to supervise medical students and residents. During this period, I had the opportunity to finalize original articles, writing reviews, organizing, and analyzing more carefully the data of ongoing experiments. Furthermore, as BMC Cancer Associate Editor, since many researchers experienced difficulty in meeting the timelines associated with peer review process during normal times due to COVID-19 outbreak, I offered all my support to BMC Cancer Editor, **Dr. Linda Gummlich**, handling more submitted manuscripts through the peer review process in order to avoid delays in providing authors with a decision on their manuscript. At the end of such exhausting day, I had just a short time to devote to my two kids in lockdown, Gaetano and Camilla Sophia. Despite the risk of COVID-19, I decided to go back home every day, hugging them and whispering in their ears that they are the true my heroes of this challenge.



## [Luigi Marano](#)

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Luigi Marano is an Associate Editor for the BMC Cancer journal. He was born in Maddaloni (CE), Italy, in 1983. He qualified from the Second University of Naples, Italy, in 2007 and he was admitted to the General Surgical Training in Naples the following year. He qualified as a board certified Surgeon in 2014 and during his experience he expressed subspecialty interests in upper gastrointestinal surgery and surgical oncology. To further this interest he was awarded a 2nd level Master's Degree in "Surgical Gastrointestinal Oncology" at Catholic University of Sacred Heart of Rome, Italy, in 2013. Luigi continued his academic career as a PhD student from 2013 to 2016 focused on "Biotechnologies applied to surgical sciences" at the Second University of Naples. After his PhD degree he achieved a position of Consultant Surgeon at Multidisciplinary Robotic Surgery, "San Matteo degli Infermi" Hospital, AUSL Umbria 2, Spoleto (PG), Italy. Luigi is the author of several peer reviewed articles, reviews and book chapters mainly focused on upper gastrointestinal surgery and surgical oncology. He is national coordinator of Italian Society of Surgical Oncology (young) and steering committee member of EYSAC (European Young Surgeon Alumni Club) - ESSO (European Society of Surgical Oncology). Since 2019 Luigi Marano is an Assistant Professor of Surgery at University of Siena, Department of Medicine, Surgery, and Neurosciences and he is assigned to the Surgical Oncology Unit directed by Professor Franco Roviello.