

Vitruvian Man Redesigned in the COVID-19 Era

Sir,

In his famous drawing dated back to 1490, Leonardo da Vinci represented human body proportions as described by the Roman architect Vitruvius. The drawing, universally known as "The Vitruvian man" or "Canon of Proportions" is an imperishable masterpiece of art in which the human being boasts a central place in the universe.^[1-3]

About 500 years later, humanity is facing one of the most terrible pandemic compelling the world to prolonged lockdown, affecting global economy and forcing the mankind to redefining priorities in life. In the author's perception, behavior of the human being in the current Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) scenario appears more distorted than the original Leonardo da Vinci description [Figure 1]. Heads and faces appear sheltered, mouth and nose covered for personal and environmental protection, hands entwined under a double layer of gloves, and the brain concentrating on the new challenge of saving human race.

In February 2020, the entire scientific world was unaware of what to expect from this novel COVID-19, announced by Wuhan.^[4] The ordeal for life to deal with it was unprecedented. It is presently July 2020 and the world is still sailing by sight

with few countries gradually getting back to normalcy, some facing continued spread of epidemic, while others heading towards a second wave of coronavirus disease.^[5]

What should we learn from the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak that has rapidly spread globally and is seriously threatening the previously undiscussed role of the human being at the center of universe?

A symbol of the Italian Renaissance, beautiful example of artistic and scientific fusion, the Vitruvian man, continues to fascinate anyone looking at it. The genius of Leonardo depicted the ideal man in two superimposed positions with arms and legs inscribed in a circle and a square, ideally bridging the gap between terrestrial and the divine.

An image frequently associated with the practice of medicine, the Vitruvian Man, has been symbolically used to describe harmony, symmetry, and complexity of the human being at the center of universe.^[6] Uncertainty and frailty are the dominant features of the present day scenario. Closed are the doors in the background behind which the most fragile humanity is fighting to survive. Healthcare workers manifest signs of physical and stress damage; undisclosed stigma is reflected in patients and their families.

COVID-19 is, in fact, affecting not only the patients but also clinicians. Victims of a previously unknown systemic disease are intensely growing as objects of clinical and experimental investigations. Specialists of several disciplines, and especially intensivists, are unceasingly fighting to save lives, to preserve the patients from organ dysfunction and to discover new treatments while, as persons themselves, silently hoping to avoid the hit of infection.

Someone called them Heroes, while a renewed Vitruvian man could be the best way to depict them.

It will happen one day, like today, that a special patient with a previously unknown disease, will need your care intensively. The new coronavirus has spread all over the world and there is a global urgency to treat the patients in need. In your long professional life, you have faced and successfully managed complex critical cases, but the current challenge imposed by COVID-19 appears to be a new one. The first time you go in, you will never forget. The night before, you can't sleep. The morning arrives when you will face the new virus. You can't see it, but will feel it. You are proud of your job, but weak on your own. You concentrate on yourself. You are prepared for the fight. You want to save the others and your own life. You dressed carefully, you were never so prudent. A heartfelt Namaste gesture and you go in. You return yourself as every day of your life. The sun will shine again.



Figure 1: Vitruvian man in the era of COVID-19. Clinical picture of an intensivist (below) in comparison to Vitruvian man (above) of Leonardo da Vinci just before entering the negative pressure rooms of a COVID-ICU in Messina, Italy

[Letter to Editor](#)

We all are working and hoping for a day to come when intensivists and health care workers will succeed.

Dedicated to all Colleagues who lost their lives in the noble interest of their patients

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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Anna Teresa Mazzeo

Department of Adult and Pediatric Pathology, University of Messina, Messina, Italy

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Anna Teresa Mazzeo,
Department of Adult and Pediatric Pathology,
University of Messina, Messina, Italy.
E-mail: annateresamazzeo@unime.it

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