THE POLITICAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Joe Biden will be the 46th President of the US and one of his first actions after winning the election was to lay out plans for his COVID Taskforce. The political and the medical are inseparable. A presidential election is polarising but, increasingly, the calculus of COVID-19 is conducted in base two. Everything is 0 or 1. We argue about the dichotomy of lockdown versus freedom. It’s not extended to such shades.

Sandel sets out to diagnose the root causes of populism and turns his gaze on meritocracy in *The Tyranny of Merit*.1 We are immersed in it; the meritocratic drivers in society are not eliminated, credentialism is the last refuge of an industrial society. In a meritocratic society, this means the winners must believe they have earned their success through their own talent and hard work. In any meritocracy there are losers and they are likely to be humiliated and resentful. The winners have little sympathy and the overall result is ‘corrosive of commonality.’

Professor Ilona Kickbusch from the Global Health Centre in Geneva teased out the political determinants of health in The Academy of Medical Sciences and The Lancet Global Health Centre in Geneva teased out ‘corrosive of commonality.’ 2

 Increasingly, two major themes in the BJGP are digital health and the desire to preserve aspects of care we would want as patients ourselves. We have an Analysis article on digital health but the importance of touch is not to be forgotten alongside an important commentary on the power of personal care. *Life & Times* goes beyond diagnosis to, more than anything, the human elements of clinical practice without which we would all be lost.

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**REFERENCES**


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