

President's Message – May 2020

Opportunities for our Future

May 12, 2020 marked the launch of the *International Year of Women in Statistics and Data Science: Happy 200th Birthday Florence Nightingale*. We celebrate the anniversary of the birth of a public health reformer who effectively used data analysis to lobby for change in health care and hospital practice. I encourage you to view the [videos](#) celebrating the start of this year.



How would Florence Nightingale think about the impact of a pandemic on our lives and the strategies we employ to limit the spread? My sense is that she would be making practical recommendations based on the available data.

Our profession is one in which we talk about decision making in the presence of uncertainty and variability. Decisions that are robust to assumptions are clearly valued. So how do we need to think about pandemic uncertainty and ISI activities?

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the landscape of professional meetings in 2020 with the Joint Statistical Meetings in Philadelphia becoming a virtual conference this summer and the International Biometrics Conference 2020 meeting in Seoul not being held this year. Uncertainties about a vaccine and possible treatments continue: when will effective treatments be available? When will vaccines be available? When will travel restrictions be lifted? How does this uncertainty impact planning and decisions about the ISI World Statistics Congress 2021 in The Hague? Are there opportunities to explore and include others who might not attend a WSC in person and who might be interested and able to participate if we implement this meeting using a different format?

We have a group looking at contingencies for the WSC 2021. If we assume possible travel restrictions or social distancing or no COVID-19 vaccine, then some virtualization of the program will be necessary. Given the breadth of time zones represented by ISI members and potential WSC attendees, asynchronous, recorded sessions will need to be considered with an occasional synchronous session held for special activities such as the awarding of the International Prize in Statistics or the President's invited speaker. We are also looking to have a strong short course program to support the professional development of our colleagues, workshops for young statisticians and a mechanism to support more personal exchanges among smaller groups such as career conversations with senior leaders in official statistics, business, industry and academia.

Change can be difficult but it represents opportunity. ISI leadership and staff look forward to working with you to take full advantage of this opportunity. Please email your WSC 2021-related

ideas, comments and suggestions to wsc2021ideas@isi-web.org. I hope that you and your family will remain healthy during this world-impacting pandemic.

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ISI President

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