

## Personal view: gaining therapeutic power!

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In all five continents of the world, Ministers of Health are declaring that lockdown was a consequence of COVID-19 and that it explains the high prevalence of mental health problems in all age groups. It resulted in loneliness because of social distancing and masking.

It was the father of modern medicine, Sir William Osler in Oxford, in the early 20th century whose therapeutic power was said to be friendship. Another Oxford professor much more recently said 'Friendship is the single most important factor for health, well-being and happiness'.<sup>1</sup> As a dermatologist,

I have highlighted previously that one sees many lonely and isolated people and that people affected by leprosy over the past 1000 years were the best example as social distancing was the key to management.<sup>2</sup> Patients I have seen with lymphatic filariasis were often lonely too, as their family and community socially distanced them because of their appearance and odour. Management of skin disease must always be friendly and this can be taught by example to community health workers without the current fear of further overloading their curriculum, as they may be the first to meet such patients in isolation. It will give them tremendous therapeutic power.

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### References

1. Dunbar RIM. The anatomy of friendship. *Trends Cogn Sci* 2018; **22**:32–51.
2. Ryan T. Editorial: friendship in the age of COVID-19. *Postgrad Med J* 2022; **98**:485–6.