



University Hospital of Wales

mmorgan@bmj.com Follow Matt on

Twitter: @dr\_mattmorgan

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2021;373:n1177<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n1177>

Published: 11 May 2021

## CRITICAL THINKING

## Matt Morgan: Covid helped me travel, with colleagues as guides

Matt Morgan *intensive care consultant*

As well as killing more than three million people worldwide, covid-19 has killed travel. Over the past year my diary has been filled with blank spaces where it used to show weekends away and long haul flights. Yet, in many ways, I have never travelled so much. I didn't need my passport for any of these trips: they all took place in my own hospital.

As a new consultant five years ago, the first thing I did was take a mystery tour of my own hospital. I pressed the top button in the lift, going to the seventh floor, before walking into and out of every corridor I passed. I soon found specialties that I hadn't known existed, equipment I didn't know we had, and people I had never met. I did the same on each floor down until I became subterranean.

Before the covid pandemic, that hospital tour had faded from my memory. The intensive care unit I worked in had thick walls that were hard to leave, thanks to the protection they gave to patients and staff. And yet, shelter also brings shade. It stops light from being shone on new ideas and better ways of working. But covid-19 has changed all of that.

We soon found that intensive care was not one location but many. Coming to work was like visiting new places. Again, I travelled around the hospital: to respiratory wards, to the children's hospital, to wherever I was needed; and sometimes to the chapel, where I was not. Again, I spent time with new people as well as old friends, across the rickety bridge between specialties. Cross disciplinary working meant that we moved between worlds and didn't become so easily frustrated with each other. It wasn't all rosy, of course—but, like making friends on a holiday, we knew that it wouldn't last forever, so we all made the most of the good times.

These trips around my own hospital, and into the working lives of others, have been hugely valuable. Although I didn't exactly walk in someone else's shoes, at least I now know what shoes they wear and where the shoe cupboard is. I encourage you all to do a tour of your own hospital, from top to bottom. Take your time, walk and talk, and think about how your trip could be made better. This is often a trip that our patients travel, albeit one that they didn't want to book.

Rather than attending another virtual conference, you could spend some study leave in colleagues' clinics, on their ward round, or even just asking them to be your travel guide.

Competing interests: I have read and understood BMJ policy on declaration of interests and declare that I have no competing interests.

Provenance and peer review: Commissioned; not externally peer reviewed.

Matt Morgan is an honorary senior research fellow at Cardiff University, consultant in intensive care medicine, research and development lead in critical care at University Hospital of Wales, and an editor of *BMJ OnExamination*.