

IN THE EYE OF THE VIRUS, O&P HUMANITARIAN CARE CHANGED FOREVER

[Home](#) > [Articles](#) > In The Eye of The Virus, O&P Humanitarian Care Changed Forever
By **Dino Scanio, MPH, CO/L**
[June 2020 Issue](#)

The world is grappling with COVID-19, and how. Irrefutably, the O&P profession must cope with the effects of the virus. Humanitarian O&P organizations, nongovernment organizations, and nonprofits must also understand that providing humanitarian care has witnessed a permanent transformation.

The FOOT Foundation (Florida O&P Outreach Team) has provided care for over 13 years with its global clinical operations and has improved the lives of more than 1,000 children and adults who need O&P services. Humanitarian organizations will need to adapt, improvise, and overcome the obstacles placed before them by COVID-19 because the way charity care has been provided will have to be changed for the betterment of public health.

All businesses and organizations that provide O&P care must examine the financial aspects of their operational structure. Humanitarian organizations are at the forefront of this financial battle because monetary donations that have kept their causes alive will be greatly diminished. The financial decline will require significant restructuring and cost-containment measures, including analyzing purchased versus donated supplies, and finding more opportunities for facilities to repurpose rather than discard items that could be used in humanitarian clinics abroad. Organizations like The FOOT Foundation are known for the repurposing of supplies and the utilization of more cost-effective materials that achieve the same clinical outcomes as expensive materials. Everyone will have to look at creative and sustainable ways to provide O&P care in developing countries.

Unfortunately, this global pandemic will lead to a reduction in patients seen, not only due to the policy decisions, but also for monetary savings during these difficult times. Correspondingly, business owners

and leaders have started to embrace the meaning of risk mitigation. For humanitarian organizations, mitigation plans are nothing new, particularly in organizations operating in developing countries. Until now, foodborne pathogens have been the most common variable that required mitigation protocols. The standard protocols organizations like FOOT Foundation practice only mark a beginning in the war against pandemics like COVID-19. The safety and health of volunteers and others should always be the priority, and to maintain that, a few new tools will help build a more robust mitigation plan to clinical care in underserved countries, and can be translated to all O&P care providers.

Humanitarian groups will now need to consider screening all patients and volunteers. The possible use of face shields, PPE coveralls, and increased usage of antibacterial handwashing are measures to prevent virus exposure. Furthermore, it is also essential to check all travel advisories regularly before departure and during stays when volunteering. Be prepared to react at the location if someone gets sick, infected, and/or injured. These are just a few tips to consider when developing a mitigation plan, but remember, as we have seen firsthand, things can change by the minute.

Being actively involved in public health has given me the opportunity to see the gaps in protecting staff and patients and what improvements can be made to improve the patient experience. The novel coronavirus has changed the way we live and how healthcare is delivered. Society will learn from its mistakes and grow upon its achievements during COVID-19. This will be a historical global teaching moment for mankind.

Dino Scanio, MPH, CO/L, is the founder of the FOOT Foundation. He can be reached at footfoundation2007@yahoo.com.