

Want to watch this presentation? [Click here](#) to register for access to XUG videos

# Publishing in Place During a Pandemic: *Riding the Monster Wave*

October 21, 2020

Byron Breedlove

Managing Editor, *Emerging Infectious Diseases*

National Center for Emerging and  
Zoonotic Infectious Diseases

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

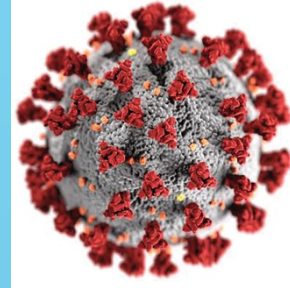
# Background

- Launched in **1995** in response to **1992** Institute of Medicine report, *Emerging Infections: Microbial Threats to Health in the United States*.
- Communicates threat of emerging infections worldwide with a public health focus.
- Open access, public domain, no author fees.
- Broad international authorship base as emerging infections occur all over the world, often in areas where public health infrastructure is fragile.
- Rigorously peer-reviewed by independent subject matter specialists from all over the world.

# *More* Background

- Not an official voice of CDC—no editorial oversight.
- Conclusions, findings, opinions expressed by authors contributing to EID do not necessarily reflect official positions of CDC or authors' affiliated institutions.
- Most EID articles represent work from researchers not affiliated with CDC.
- Averaged about **2,100** submissions/year from 2015-2019 with **25%** acceptance rate.
- **11,134** published articles; **>427,300** citations of articles.
- Issues before COVID-19 had around **42** articles.
- **>300** EID podcasts; **24** articles/year offer free CME credit

# Emergence of COVID-19



COVID-19, the quintessential emerging infectious disease, is the kind of disease for which EID was founded. Our work suddenly became more urgent as we waited for submissions.

Ironically, the theme for February's issue was Coronavirus, because of articles about Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) and porcine deltacoronavirus (PDCoV). EID had not received any COVID-19 articles when this issue was published in late January 2020.

## EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES



Coronaviruses

February 2020



Art: Unknown. The Rider on a White Horse. Miniature from a Manuscript, 1600-80. Chromatography, ink, and gold on paper. 10 1/4 in. x 15 1/8 in. (26.7 cm x 39.3 cm). Gift of the artist's family to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

# Our View in February 2020



# Waiting for the Monster Wave

- Recognized urgency for getting info to infectious disease specialists, public health officials, policy makers, & others.
- Understood that authors expected even quicker action on their COVID-19 manuscripts.
- Began planning how to handle surge in submissions, to coordinate peer review, and to expedite publishing accepted articles.
- Communicated with staff about the need for “all hands on deck” and greater work loads.
- Ensured that everyone could work remotely.

# Riding the Wave



# Keeping Our Balance

- Abruptly switched all staff to remote working in mid-March and reconfigured EID's processes as needed.
- Recruited former editor in chief of *MMWR* and *Public Health Reports* to help EID's editor in chief review submissions and coordinate peer review.
- Added staff to bolster key work in processing submissions, managing peer review, communicating with authors, and copy editing.
- Requested funding for **5** additional eXtyles licenses.
- Developed a Coronavirus Spotlight to help readers locate articles about SARS-CoV-2.
- Kept staff informed as names for what is now SARS-CoV-2 morphed during the early months of the pandemic.



# Some 2020 Metrics

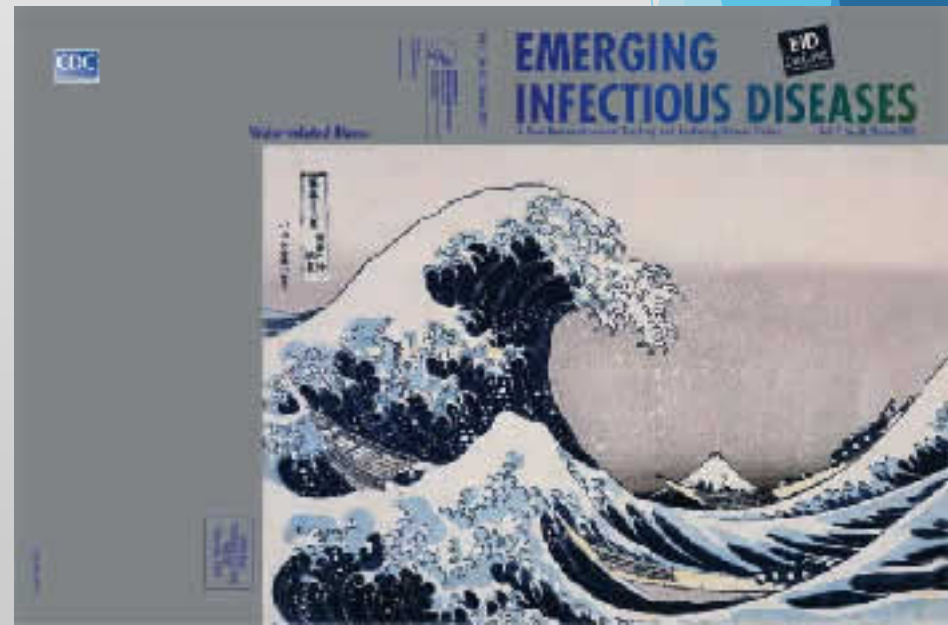
- **2,870** papers out of **4,322** submissions (**66%**) YTD are related to coronavirus as of 10/15/2020.
- Published **3** COVID-19 articles in May, **12** in June, **18** in July, **24** in August, **30** in September (biggest issue ever), **29** in October, **24** in November, **16** in December.
- Expedited publication of **106** of **155** COVID-19 articles and published all as early release (before the issue).
- Turnaround time from submission to publication dropped, even while the number of published articles increased from an average of **535** per year for the last **5** years to a projected **650** articles in 2020.
- **6** articles now rank among top **100** of **16,028,822** articles tracked by Altmetric, indicating some success in communicating vital public health information.

# Lessons Learned, Spurned

- Assess what you can control and prepare for during a pandemic event such as the current one.
- Understand there will be mistakes from time to time and keep matters in perspective. Perfect may not always what is needed during a pandemic.
- Be transparent about expectations, problems, and results.
- Focus on dependability and flexibility: publishing is a complex, dynamic enterprise.
- People are stressed. Allow flexible work schedules, encourage people, stay connected with check in meetings, acknowledge accomplishments and innovations, share key metrics. Do not try to run things like anything is normal.
- Remind staff that their work is important and contributes to the global scientific response to the pandemic.

# Looking Ahead

- From our experience following the Ebola and Zika outbreaks, we know that COVID-19 research will become more detailed, specialized, and refined and will dominant submissions for years.
- Experience we gained during the COVID-19 pandemic will help inform how we work during future outbreaks and pandemics.
- Exploring ways to collaborate with other publishers, instead of competing, would yield benefits for all and speed the flow of information during pandemic events.

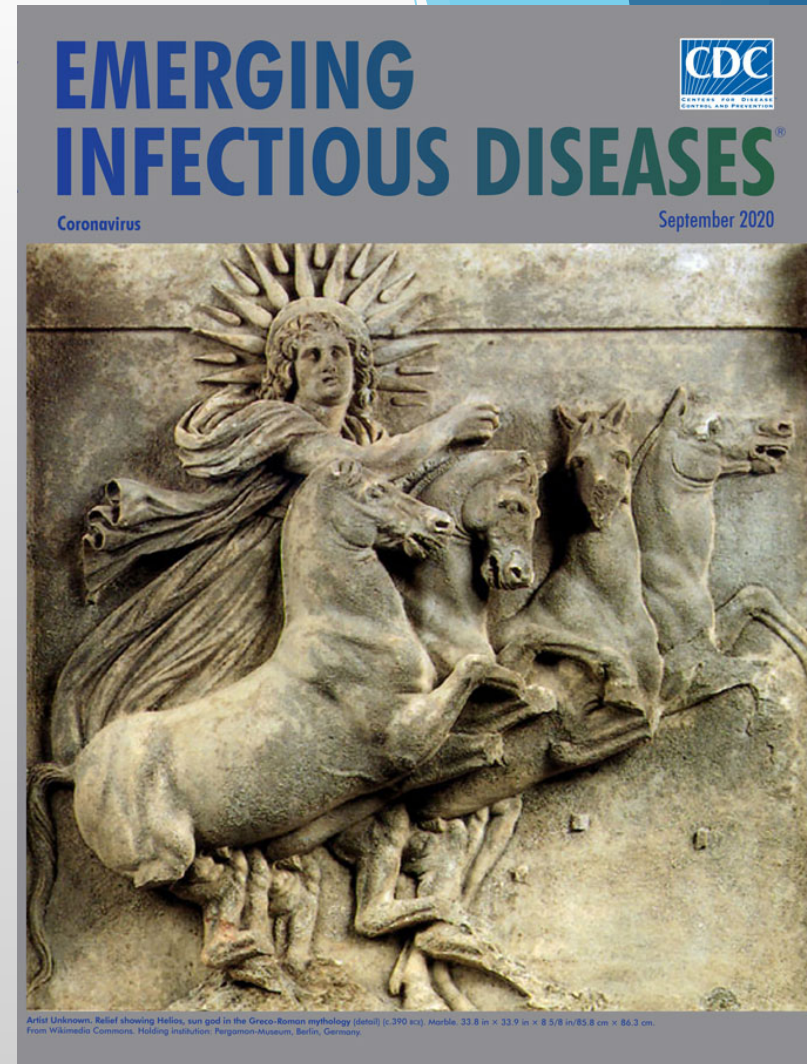


# Stay Well & Get in Touch!

- ▶ Email: [wbb1@cdc.gov](mailto:wbb1@cdc.gov)
- ▶ Phone: 404.639.5185
- ▶ [ORCiD](#) | [LinkedIn](#)
- ▶ [wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid)

“Computers are useless.  
They can only give  
you answers.”

—Pablo Picasso



## Thank you for your time today!