

In the Bookstores

Coronavirus: A book for Children

Written by Elizabeth Jenner,
Kate Wilson, and Nia Roberts
Illustrated by Axel Scheffler.

ISBN: 9781839941467

Publisher: Nosy Crow Ltd

15 pages

Free to download from

[https://dlcs.io/file/wellcome/5/
b3226382x_0001.pdf](https://dlcs.io/file/wellcome/5/b3226382x_0001.pdf)

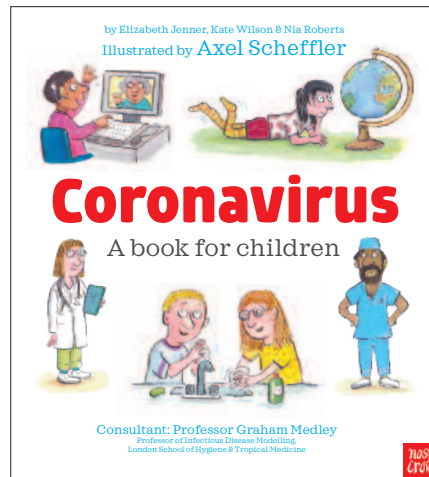
The Wellcome Collection, as part of the Wellcome Trust, operates a free museum and library in London dedicated to science and health. Through curated exhibitions, broadcasting, and publishing, as well as digital works and an art collection, the Wellcome Collection explores “medicine, life and art” (<https://wellcomecollection.org/>).

As part of their remit, they provide online access to “freely licensed digital books, artworks, photos and images of historical library materials and museum objects”, and their online repository is an interesting and eclectic mix of health-related “ephemera”. This includes an array of past health campaigns from around the world alongside more modern equivalents. The ability to adapt and write for your audience is a key skill for any medical writer and this collection presents many examples illustrating the use of different communication styles that have been used to inform health campaigns and their respective audience.

Although Sir Henry Wellcome acquired the bulk of the Wellcome Collection between 1890 and 1936, the collection has been expanded year on year and includes current health-related ephemera. For example, there are over 2000 items related to tuberculosis in the form of books, digital images, pictures, ephemera and videos in the date range 1659 (an academic dissertation) through to 2018 (four watercolour paintings for a comic strip about bovine tuberculosis in the UK).

Dating from 1986 onwards, more than 5000 items in the repository are associated with campaigns designed to combat the threat of HIV and AIDS associated with untreated HIV infection. Around 1987, when the public had great fears about this new and unknown virus, a seminal UK health campaign was conducted to promote public

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awareness of the virus and AIDS. Items related to a government AIDS health campaign can be viewed in the Wellcome Collection, including the UK government-produced leaflet called “AIDS: Don’t Die of Ignorance.” At the time a copy of this leaflet was sent to all British households to inform them about the disease. Information in this pamphlet was presented to the reader in plain black type, in the form of a series of 10 questions and answers (<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/fd7ab5tc>). The answer to Question 2: Why should you be concerned about AIDS? includes the stark statement “There is no cure, and it kills.” Alongside the leaflet, there was a video advert called “AIDS iceberg”, which featured a black, marble headstone with letters being chiselled out, and when finished, the headstone falls to the ground revealing the word AIDS (<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/d3us7ffp>). This campaign did not use colour images, nor did it use cartoons or humour; it was clearly designed to strike a sombre, dark and apocalyptic note.

In stark contrast, and coming right up to date, there is a downloadable book entitled *Coronavirus: A Book for Children* written by Elizabeth Jenner, Kate Wilson, and Nia Roberts with illustrations by Axel Scheffler ([https://dlcs.io/file/wellcome/5/
b3226382x_0001.pdf](https://dlcs.io/file/wellcome/5/b3226382x_0001.pdf)). The content of the book is aimed at primary age children. It is free to download and explains what a coronavirus is, the types of symptoms you might have if you catch the virus, how you might catch it, and what

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happens if you do. The book is brightly coloured, has impish drawings, and is written in an upbeat manner. It is designed to inform the reader by presenting information about the virus in a non-threatening and enjoyable way. The information is displayed in small bite-sized pieces to explain and not frighten or talk down to the reader.

The authors explain why people are so worried about the coronavirus, whether there is a cure coming, and what everyone can do to help stop the spread of the virus. They don’t shy away from explaining complex scientific concepts and include a description of antibodies and how they help fight infection:

The body has an amazing weapon against viruses called antibodies. Tiny cells in your blood make antibodies to fight each different virus invader. The antibodies catch the viruses, then the blood cells swallow them up and destroy them and then the person gets better.

This is a well-written, beautifully illustrated downloadable pdf book. It is a good example of writing about health in a way that children can easily relate to and understand. Most importantly it is designed to allay their fears and is in complete contrast to the “AIDS: Don’t Die of Ignorance” campaign from over 30 years ago.

I look forward to viewing the health literature that the Wellcome Collection will undoubtedly accumulate on the coronavirus pandemic. I can’t help but wonder what future medical writers might say about the tenor and content of the coronavirus health campaign 30 years from now.

As the authors say in their children’s coronavirus book, “One day, this strange time will be over.” In the meantime, I hope you all stay safe and well.

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Images from the Wellcome Collection

Several images from the Wellcome Collection have been brought together to reflect themes and short photo stories created around them. Dr Estelle Paranque's short photo story entitled "The Celebrity Physician and the Plague" presents an outline of the life of Charles de Lome (1584–1678) a 17th century doctor who invented the "plague prevention costume". Paranque's article is illustrated by a series of pictures illuminating "plague prevention" clothing that Charles de Lome and others adapted to protect themselves from infectious diseases through the ages.

Dr Paranque writes, "This costume covered the person wearing it from head to toe so that the air – which carried dangerous viruses and germs – could not penetrate, offering a layer of protection to doctors as they attended the sick." You can clearly see that the 17th century outfit is a precursor to the full personal protective equipment that health care professionals are wearing to treat COVID-19 patients in our hospitals today (see pictures at <https://wellcomecollection.org/articles/XvBkkhAAACIAu441>).

A physician wearing a 17th century "plague prevention costume".



Social media

For many people social media has become a primary source of information, including that related to medicine and healthcare. This issue will include articles about this trend, how to leverage the different social media tools, and how to write for social media.

Guest Editor: Diana Ribeiro

The deadline for feature articles is December 8, 2020.

The March 2021 edition

Don't miss!