

EDITOR'S NOTE

Remember when a simple “How are you?” seemed like a less loaded question? One day: “I’m good; everyone’s good; yep, family’s doing great.” Other days: “Sure, I’m hanging in there.” But what goes unsaid when we’re “hanging in there” is that we might have been up worrying at 2 a.m. with a bout of COVID-related anxiety before work. Or we may have gotten a little testy in morning traffic. Or that we want to visit with people, but sure don’t want them to breathe on us much.



**BETSY
TAYLOR**

In health care settings, supporting resiliency in those who care for patients extends far beyond wanting a productive workforce. Each person should be valued in a Catholic health care environment for their own innate dignity and the desire that they are able to flourish as a person, not just as a worker. Resiliency, at its foundational level, is understood as recovering quickly from difficulties or springing back into shape.

But I do wonder, as we live through this pandemic, should we want to spring back into shape? I don’t know anyone unchanged by this, who hasn’t experienced a prolonged feeling of anxiety, stress, grief or anger. Who hasn’t experienced loss, sometimes compounded due to isolation or the ever-changing circumstances brought by COVID-19.

We can, and do, marshal our better selves — over and over again. But I think it’s OK to be changed by this pandemic. I’m both better and worse versions of myself, and I know I’m not alone in that. And hearing that from others, including health care providers, helped to shape some of the articles in this issue.

One message I heard repeatedly from clinicians and administrators: providing people under tremendous pressure with reflections and meditations is wonderful, but it’s not enough. Clinicians well-versed in reducing burnout — or trying to mitigate the effects — repeated that systemic changes are key to building or sustaining resiliency. In her article, nurse and writer Erin Archer points to a National Academy of Medicine finding that in order to do so, it’s key to fix the workplace, rather than try to “fix the worker.” Articles in this issue explore how leaders have been listening and responding to staff needs by making systemic changes to improve the work environment, address compensation disparities and support mental well-being. This is also important for patients and their families.

Health Progress appreciates that Trinitas Regional Medical Center opened its doors to the publication, allowing photographer Aristide

Economopoulos to spend two shifts documenting care providers and how they’ve looked after patients and one another — physically, spiritually and emotionally during the pandemic. *Health Progress* Managing Editor Charlotte Kelley and I feel honored that people at Trinitas in New Jersey were willing to share their stories with us. The level of commitment to your patients and your fellow staff members is nothing short of inspiring.

Sometimes, we need to resist the all-too-human tendency to feel we must drive ourselves forward all the time to persevere over any challenge. One insightful take on resilience comes from CHA’s Senior Director of Ministry Formation Diarmuid Rooney. He explains that being on-the-go all the time can lead to a kind of inner fragmentation and disconnection from self, others and God. He stresses the importance of retreat. “Resiliency in the context of spiritual and especially leadership formation is definitely the capacity to take time alone or to retreat, to enable one’s internal resources to be nourished by silence through the Spirit,” he writes.

Those interviewed and writing for this issue also think deeply on moral injury and the suffering that some colleagues have experienced caring for many patients who have died or in losing their own coworkers or family members to COVID-19; they outline a number of ways they’ve proactively revised employee assistance programs and mental and spiritual health supports for those working in Catholic health care settings. Please know how much others want you to reach for help if it’s needed.

I was talking to a coworker yesterday, and I mentioned that I’d recently gotten my booster shot at a grocery store. Then, I thought about it for a minute. Roughly two years ago, health care providers and scientists were just figuring out a foundational understanding of this pandemic. Now, vaccines are available at the grocery. That’s an astonishingly hopeful piece of information to me. The work you do in health care matters. It’s vital. You’re vital. My hope is you find something (or multiple somethings) of value in this issue of *Health Progress*. Something that sparks your curiosity, or a suggestion for your workplace, or a moment of inner calm. May it then become sustainable.

JOURNAL OF THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

www.chausa.org

HEALTH PROGRESS®

Reprinted from *Health Progress*, Winter 2022, Vol. 103, No. 1
Copyright © 2022 by The Catholic Health Association of the United States
