

## EDITOR'S NOTE

In this strange, world-changing year, I have had more to do with nurses than ever before. Several people in my family had big health crises in the wrong year to have them. We met nurses who worked in ORs, ERs and ICUs, but also nurse practitioners, mental health nurses, nursing case workers and home health nurses who continue with us along the long and uncertain paths to recovery. Some I'll remember for a long time, others I never got to know their names. To a person, they have been highly skilled, kind, innovative, patient, tenacious, knowledgeable, gentle, clear and truthful about information that must have been hard to deliver.



MARY ANN  
STEINER

One hospital we frequented had posters in the elevators with illustrations of superhero clinicians whose ripped physiques and muscle-hugging outfits touted them as health care heroes. Another had wall signs noting that their hospital had earned the highest rating for nursing care. If it came down to a choice, I'd pick a nurse over a hero any day.

Scrubs can't compare with flashy, form-fitting costumes, but I see heroes as loners who swoop in and swish out. Nurses, on the other hand, exercise consummate teamwork and are renowned for the constancy of their compassionate care. It's the reason they belong to the most trusted profession in this country for 18 years running.

With that sort of reputation, you'd think that nurses would have one of the most credible and sought-after voices in health care. That's not always the case. The authors in our special section — every one of them a nurse — have important suggestions for how the current nursing workforce can deal with the stresses of COVID and the volatile health care environment, and especially how nurses of the future need to be prepared beyond current medical models and business plans.

In the following pages nurses are very concerned about the overall safety and well-being of their colleagues suffering from compassion fatigue, moral distress and grief, as well as coping with insufficient resources and inadequate training for pandemic situations. And with eyes on the future they are reimagining the education of future nurses with strong recommendations for how nursing schools can reformulate curricula in alignment with social determinants of health. They remind us that nurses at executive levels bring an unmatched perspective of clinical,

administrative and operational excellence.

CHA joins the World Health Organization in recognizing 2020 as the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife. We are especially pleased that Julie Trocchio, CHA's resident nurse and champion of aging services and community benefit, celebrates the particular contributions of the nurses of Catholic health care in her introduction to this magazine.

As *Health Progress* moves into its new quarterly format, we will regularly feature articles that emphasize three topics critical to Catholic health care right now: confronting racial inequities and disparities of care; how the ministry is activating its own transformation within the health care environment; and ongoing dialogue about COVID and its effects. The three features related to those subjects are "Two Zip Codes: A World Apart," which explores the disparities of health and resources in two St. Louis-area neighborhoods; a look at reimagined approaches to formation and leadership in "A Path to Renewal in Work and Leadership"; and a discussion of one hospital's discernment about distributing a limited quantity of a COVID medication, outlining an ethical approach to a dilemma likely to become more prevalent.

Your next issue of *Health Progress* won't arrive until mid-January, and my first inclination was to send you early Christmas and New Year greetings. But in this strange year and within this liminal space in which we find ourselves between the world we knew and the one we're moving into, Advent greetings are more timely as it is the season for waiting, preparing, braving the unknown, entering the miracle and protecting the gift of hope within us. "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart," wrote St. Luke. And so do we. Advent Blessings from your friends at *Health Progress*.

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