

EDITOR'S NOTE

Jesus' return to Capernaum where he meets a paralytic person is one of the more interesting health care stories in the Bible; it's about many things — faith, friendship, holistic healing of body, mind and spirit — but it's also about health care access.



**BETSY
TAYLOR**

Crowds gather around Jesus when he returns to this city by the Sea of Galilee, and he preaches to them from the home where he is staying. Because the doorway is packed with a crowd wanting to see him, four men break through the roof and lower a paralytic person down to Jesus, in hopes that he can heal the man. Jesus first forgives his sins — a true balm of spiritual care — and then tells the man to pick up his mat and walk.

It's striking to me that this person in need of healing had a support network. There were people around him who essentially figured out how to navigate a challenging system — when the men supporting the paralytic person can't get through the door, they go through the roof — to get him the access to the healing he needed. It's also a story about how healing is not just a physical process. Jesus tends to the person's spiritual needs before the physical ones. This Biblical story is visually represented in the national awards CHA gives out, and I think it's with good reason. The story encompasses so many aspects of care that transcend time.

This issue of *Health Progress* is themed around Opening Doors: Access to Care, taking a look at some of the complexities involved in finding, paying for and receiving the right care at the right time and in the right place.

Opening doors to this care involves multiple factors. In his article, Paulo Pontemayor, CHA's senior director of government relations, points to the fact that today health care access is tied to insurance coverage. And that CHA's membership has long viewed health care as “a basic human right essential to human flourishing.” So, work by CHA and other organizations to educate those on Medicaid about how to “Protect What's Precious” and keep their coverage is one way to open a door. But, as this issue makes clear, more than one door needs to be opened.

Author Tricia Steele writes about the worries of patients with chronic conditions, how they need timely access to care providers — often including specialists not always located near them. She describes how they need to feel listened to and like a valued part of their own care team. She reminds readers how some days just getting out of bed and navigating a complicated, convoluted system can feel overwhelming for someone with chronic illness.

Elsewhere in this issue, there are articles about ways to meet, communicate and care for populations as varied as those who are poor, those with HIV, those living through wartime, and military veterans. It is true that the barriers to affordable, quality health care can loom large. But I hope these pages will provide some inspiration for what's working, and what still needs to be worked on.

Regular readers also will enjoy hearing that author Sally J. Altman and the Before Ferguson Beyond Ferguson team were recognized in Atlanta in May for the third installment of the *Health Progress* articles focused on racial and health equity in the St. Louis region. The American Society of Business Publication Editors' ASBPE Educational Foundation bestowed the Journalism That Matters award for the piece published in 2022. We usually don't seek a lot of attention when *Health Progress* receives recognition, but thought this award merited a little notice, especially as the articles are part of CHA's resources and ongoing work for health equity through the “We Are Called” campaign.

When Jesus forgave the sins of the paralytic person and performed the miracle that allowed him to walk, the Bible says: “They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, ‘We have never seen anything like this.’” (Mark 2:12) My hope for us all in the continuing work of Catholic health care is that we may be inspired by this tradition, and astound one another and those we care for with a steadfast commitment to bring comfort and healing.

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