

EDITOR'S NOTE

Most of us have a favorite Gospel, and mine is Mark. I haven't calculated the ratio of miracles to evangelist, but I'm pretty sure you get more miracles per page in Mark than in any other. Most of them are healing miracles (no time for turning water to wine in this Gospel), and by the opening of the second chapter, Jesus already has brought to his senses a man possessed, restored Peter's ailing mother-in-law to her helpful self, cleansed a leper of his terrible sores and dispatched the paralytic to pick up his pallet and walk.



MARY ANN
STEINER

Very often the afflicted person is brought to Jesus by friends or family: Peter for his mother-in-law; the four men who lowered their paralyzed friend through the roof; Jairus for his dying daughter; and the good people of Capernaum, as "they brought to him all who were ill" (Mark 1:32). We know how intensely Martha and Mary pleaded with Jesus for their brother Lazarus in John's Gospel. Miracle stories like these not only demonstrate the power and mercy of Christ, but they also reveal the agency and hopes of community in advocating for the sick and disabled among them.

This issue of *Health Progress* is concerned with various diseases and how they threaten our public health. A lot of attention is spent on how infectious diseases could overwhelm the health of communities — H1N1, Ebola and Zika are recent examples. Although immunization and disaster preparedness for pandemic events are critical, it may be that the chronic conditions of asthma, diabetes, mental illness and heart disease pose even greater threats to public health.

Diseases that make headlines often are related to globalization, a trend more likely to speed up than slow down. Diseases that are chronic and commonplace usually are associated with social and environmental determinants of health. That means your race and ethnic background, your level of education, your family's income, your access to wholesome food and clean drinking water, and whether you have safe places to play and exercise all factor into the odds of your being susceptible to certain chronic diseases. Population health hopes to address those factors of health before disease works its way into entire communities, ensuring instead that individuals and whole communities get healthier.

Fr. Michael Rozier's excellent article which opens this magazine argues that population health has special meaning for Catholic health care. Beyond its potential to deliver better clinical outcomes at lower costs with improved health metrics for whole populations — the triple aim for all health care, secular and faith-based — it resonates with the two most sacred principles of Catholic social teaching: the dignity of every person and the pursuit of the common good. Population health is one way to reinforce the message of the Gospel: Each person's health is bound to and upheld by the health of his or her community.

And although the affliction of disease is always personal — because it is painful, embarrassing, confusing, diminishing or life-threatening — it also is borne by the community. John Donne said it so much more eloquently than population health will ever have words for, but you get the idea: No one stands alone.

We thank this issue's authors. They tackled difficult topics such as ethical considerations of contraception and immunization, imagining the end of HIV/AIDS, humanizing the heroin epidemic, and the disturbing incidence of suicide in the U.S. We are grateful for the expertise they share and the compassion that drives their research, advocacy and clinical care.

Research, advocacy and quality care feel tenuous right now. The pace of change in health care has been spinning hard and fast for a while, but the results of the 2016 election put into play even more unknowns. We hope you find helpful the overview on page 52 of how the election results could impact health care in the months ahead. Thanks to Cornerstone Government Affairs, which prepared the overview and allowed us to include it here.

It could be a wild ride as we enter 2017. It's good to be in this together and armed with hope for the healing ministry. Happy New Year to each of you from your friends at *Health Progress*.

JOURNAL OF THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

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HEALTH PROGRESS®

Reprinted from *Health Progress*, January - February 2017
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