



Times such as these

“The good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient who has the disease.” ~William Osler

Three more emails arrive in my inbox: “COVID-19 updates - latest on quarantine procedures.” The current climate of life and the steps that have been taken to stem the pandemic would have been unimaginable just weeks ago. News channels run around the clock specials on this new viral intruder that is disrupting our lives, and one can only marvel at the flurry of scientific investigation.

It feels strange, almost eerie to drive to the hospital, or anywhere for that matter. For, where there was once bustling activity, there is only silence. Streets are empty. Schools are closed. Gyms are closed. Bars and restaurants – once centers of social activity – have signs on the windows reading either “closed” or “open for takeout only.” Terms such as “social distancing” dominate the headlines. Individuals are scared and are sequestering themselves at home. So many people are on edge.

The current climate calls for these measures as they are not only appropriate, but necessary. Nevertheless, hospitals keep their doors open. Yes, there is much trepidation of the coming weeks and the preparations for the coming wave of illness; however, there is a degree of calm and readiness that I see and admire in my colleagues. The putative terrors that this virus is predicted to unleash on the public are intimidating, and yet, everywhere at work I see individuals – attendings, fellows, residents, nurses, aides, and others – who are ready to step into the fray for the sake of their fellow citizens. This dedication is the most selfless manifestation of the Hippocratic Oath. The individuals who are at the highest risk of contracting the illness and potentially disrupting their own lives are the first to step in and help others. The daily news does not alleviate one’s fears of the shortage of available testing and the uncertainty of who to even test. With this, the mind races with a plethora of questions:

Should we be apprehensive? Yes

Are there precautions that are being taken? Yes.

Is the situation changing daily? Yes.

Are people frustrated, upset, and making sacrifices? Yes.

Will individuals be turned away? No.

Will patients be seen? Yes.

Will we continue to lay hands on our patients – examine them, treat them, step into the room? Yes.

Will we be there for our patients, even to just be with them? Yes.

I may be early in my medical career; however, I have learned two core lessons (among many others) thus far – Medicine is a consistently humbling profession and at its core it is a call to service. We will beat this virus; of this I am sure. The scientific method and rigor of study that is being applied to investigate COVID-19 is unprecedented and we will understand the virus and illness better in the coming weeks to months. For now, we must remember to remain present for our patients, as we always have. Of course, there are fears among healthcare workers as there should be – fear of complications from the virus, the availability of protective gear, and all of the accompanying implications. Would we rather that the virus had never come into existence and that life would be normal? Absolutely! Evidently, that is not so as these are times in which we find ourselves. I recall one of my favorite literary quotes from none other than the Lord of the Rings character Gandalf that a colleague of mine recently quoted online:

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo. "So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring ~J.R.R. Tolkien

The selflessness, courage, and grit of all my colleagues and those with whom I work at the hospital have convinced me that our patients are in caring hands and the future is bright.

Our patients will be cared for. We will understand SARS-CoV-2. We will prevail.

Ricardo A. Nieves, MD is a first year fellow with the University of Pittsburgh and the Western PA FIT Representative Elect.

Humans of Cardiology is an opportunity for PaACC members to share motivating stories about their personal and professional lives and was inspired by the wildly popular Humans of New York series. These stories showcase the compassion shown, as well as the hardships and triumphs members go through, as medical professionals. Our goal is to connect our members via

these posts and reveal the uniqueness of our field through testimonials from our community. To submit your story, [click here](#).

This message has been sent to you the Pennsylvania Chapter, ACC
If you no longer want to receive these letters, you may [unsubscribe](#) at any time.

1554 Paoli Pike, Suite 298, West Chester, PA 19380
877-793-8171

pcacc.org