

## Attending Perspective

Coronavirus entered my world in early January. As a follower of #medtwitter, I began to see the tweet of those following the coronavirus in China. Some of the stories and videos were alarming, I was pained by all the suffering but it seemed far away. Like SARS and MERS, surely it wouldn't come here...

Then it moved to Italy and the stories of overwhelmed hospitals and a regional then countrywide lockdown happened and I felt a little less certain. I began making plans to protect myself and family. I wiped down surfaces, investigated cloth masks for my airline conference travel and increased my hand hygiene. Hoping this would be enough. Suddenly the virus was in Washington, DC, Chicago and New York. It was here and everything changed rapidly.

As a practicing physician for 10 years, I can't say that flexibility and innovation have been a constant feature of my experience at work. However, the COVID19 has really shown the best of medicine and healthcare institutions. I work in both ambulatory and hospital settings. The community called us frontline workers and it truly felt like we were going to war and our institutions were in command. Daily updates, virtual and email, became a constant. Our clinic and hospital leaders did their best to keep us informed and provide avenues for feedback and questions about the multitude of changes.

I've been impressed by the innovation and resilience of my co-workers, staff, and residents. So many unknowns exist, the panic that existed in early days has given way to vigorous study of the best evidence, how can we protect our patients, ourselves and community. What are the best masks for the clinical setting or a laboring patient? How do we create safety in our enclosed clinical spaces and still foster our care teams and collaboration with our nurses, social workers and PSRs? There are still many open questions. I'm confident that over the next year that science will settle many of these debates and provide better understanding for protecting ourselves from this novel coronavirus

What is the future? The next prediction will be as good as mine. Oklahoma has luckily been spared the harshest surge in COVID19 cases and hospitalizations. In our increasing connected society however, the stories of colleagues in China, Italy and New York has had an impact on heart of all physicians. We've seen our ER, ICU, and anesthesia colleagues face their own vulnerability in ways previously unimaginable. We've seen colleagues and residents in our specialty and many others step up to fill in the gaps and provide relief from over-tired and over-stretched systems. We've lost too many physicians and nurses who were doing what needed to be done to take care of people.

The intersection of public health, clinical medicine and public policy has never been clearer. What happens in the capitals directly connect to our safety at work and in our communities. Health disparities that were the elephant in the room of health are now the pink and green elephant in the room. Resistance in some communities to guidance on universal masking

illustrate the importance of communicating to the public about science and consistency in messaging from our leaders.

Personally, I never imagined an invisible virus in the room with me and a patient. It is now ever-present with only a cloth and surgical mask between us. How do I build rapport, relationship through these barriers? I try to show attention and care with my eyes, the sound of a laugh and continuation phrases have even more importance to build connection and let them know, behind the mask, I'm still here for you.

As we move through this year and those to come, we must be gentle with each other. This road is unpaved with uncertainties ahead. Many healthcare workers are experiencing financial and emotional distress. For physicians as we care for our patients, we need to make sure we mind our own well-being and look out for each other. The future means we are prepared, we work collectively to make sure resources get where they are needed, we build a robust public health infrastructure and we protect the most vulnerable amongst us. That's a future where we are all in, together.

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