

A few weeks into the pandemic, I was walking out to my car in the early morning wearing my oversized, flimsy hospital scrubs. A woman out walking her dog yelled from across the street, "Thank you!" I looked around expecting to see someone else, but soon discovered she was talking to me. I had never been thanked outside of the occasional sentiment at work. That day I was tired and maybe a little scared of the unknown, but her simple words really made my day.

As a family medicine resident, it feels like every day during this pandemic something changes. The day that it was announced that the virus was officially community spread in Oklahoma, I was on night float alone. I wasn't sure what this meant or how I was supposed to change my standard operation. Our after-hours phone line was busy all night with people concerned about their health and wellbeing, and I had no answers. I found myself fearful with each admit that night, unsure of if they had been properly pre-screened and if I was supposed to somehow adjust the care I was providing. The hospital service quickly adapted, and the residents were now thrown into new roles with different schedules that were constantly evolving.

Clinic has always been a place of comfort because it is stable and consistent, but in a moment, everything changed. We were thrown into a new life of telemedicine and limited visits with masks and space. As someone who enjoys the process of rapport, I was thrown into a style of minimalistic medicine with few words. I was doing visits while standing in a corner, attempting to keep distance and only approach for the physical exam. We retreated to telemedicine for several days during our time on clinic and were asked to be vulnerable by calling patients and letting them enter into our homes via virtual chat.

The resilience and flexibility that my fellow residents have shown has been truly profound. As a group that isn't particularly fond of change, they have acclimated and overcome so much. Our schedules could change in a moment's notice and everyone just continues to work hard and do as they are told with limited complaints. I also believe that even though we are now apart that we have somehow developed even stronger relationships. We have had virtual gatherings every week to help improve wellness, and I may be wrong, but it feels that our residents have become closer during this time. In chaos and uncertainty, bonds tend to become stronger, and I feel that this has proven itself within our residency.

As someone who enjoys the occasional craft, I have been particularly impressed by the creativity that has developed through all of these changes. The first day I was doing telemedicine I felt like I wasn't getting anything accomplished because I lacked resources. I didn't have test results for my diabetic patients. I didn't have weights on newborns. I had patients call with dysuria without a urinalysis. But the creativity began to blossom throughout our clinic. Hemoglobin A1cs were now being performed in cars. Urine cups were being distributed in bags in the parking lot. Babies were being weighed on home scales in the arms of their mothers. We even had patients taking their own vitals at home. It has truly been amazing watching everyone break the boundaries of typical practice to attempt to provide the best care in the present circumstances.

The impact of this pandemic has been vast in several ways, and it is true that medicine will never be the same. Everyone talks about all the changes from the pandemic that will remain. Telemedicine will likely play a much larger role in the future of medicine due to its convenience to patients and physicians. I also think we can all agree that our hygiene standards in general will forever be improved. But as someone

who will start my first practice in just over a year, I think this pandemic will have several more profound outcomes. I have learned to be more flexible and adaptable, realizing that my days don't always have to go as planned to be successful. The comradery that has developed among healthcare workers is something that I believe will remain long after things settle. And lastly, I hope that the creativity in medicine is something that only continues to flourish. The pandemic has been devastating to say the least, but maybe from all the despair, a few lasting, positive changes will remain.