

# Lifting Hearts and Saving Lives

April 3, 2020, Friday

We know this is extremely hard. No one before has ever seen what we are currently experiencing. The surge of patients, the severity of the illness, and the overall chaos and fear of the moment have taken a huge toll on everyone. As this crisis has expanded and deepened, we know that it is personally affecting many of you. The Mount Sinai family is exhausted, worn out, and beaten up. Colleagues, family members, and loved ones are getting sick, and some of our long-standing patients and friends are being consumed by this ravaging disease. It is not fair. And it is not right. But this disease does not play by the rules and we must continue to take the fight to it.

As hard as it was, this week had many moments of hope too. Samaritan's Purse has opened a field hospital outside The Mount Sinai Hospital and has started taking in our patients; the Navy's hospital ship *Comfort* has arrived in New York; the Javits Center is being converted into a hospital; our hospitals are being transformed to hold as many COVID-19 patients as possible; more PPE and other critical materials have arrived and been put in place; and every day, more and more medical professionals are showing up, volunteering to join in our fight. If nothing else, we hope you see how many people around the world are rallying in support of you and your work.

And, on a smaller level, today we will be taking one additional step to support all of you on the front lines: as long as necessary, we, along with the other members of the Health System's senior leadership team, will be taking a 50 percent reduction in pay. This money will go directly to help pay and support those on the front lines. It won't ever compare to the acts of bravery that you all perform every day, and it doesn't mend the emotional obstacles our community faces. But we believe it is the right thing to do, as every dollar will count in this fight and every penny must be marshaled for the months ahead.

While we are doing everything we can, we do understand the greater reality. As you may have read, earlier today there was an article in [The New York Times](#) which quoted Maggie Keogh, a nondenominational chaplain at The Mount Sinai Hospital. She said: "I have never seen doctors or nurses living through anything like this. They are the most profoundly professional group of people, but there is a bone-weariness." We could not agree with her more, and would extend that same sentiment to everyone working at the front lines in this humanitarian mission of our lifetimes. The work you are doing is profound. The skill and bravery you display every day cannot be fully appreciated. But your city and your country are trying to show you.

As you probably know, each night at 7, your city and your country go to their windows and make as much noise as they can, to show their support. Each night they call to you:

cheering, screaming, crying, releasing their fears and anguish in a singular voice that rises, lifts, and embraces this city and nation. They do this for you. Please hear them. Please understand what you mean to them. You are their hope, their optimism. You are what allows them to tell their kids and each other that it **will** be OK. And so, every night, they call to you, thanking you. Every night, their appreciation and support comes roaring across New York, lifting neighbors and neighborhoods, filling hearts unified in their gratitude and love for what you are doing. And, while their voices may echo through the Canyon of Heroes, know that there is no one more brave, no one more valued, and no greater hero than you.

So, in the days ahead when you find yourself weak, if you feel broken, when you need to look for inspiration, please reach out for help, but also listen to those millions of voices. The voices represent the core traits that make us human—love, kindness, compassion, empathy, unity—the essence of what is good about all of us will ensure we prevail. Heroism is contagious. So too is love. And altruism. And generosity. These fundamentally human values will be the keys to accomplishing our mission. They are why we'll eventually win this war and why they call to you each night.

We are all in this together. Thank you. It's the privilege of our lifetimes to be in this fight with you.

Ken and Dennis