

Downward Slopes and Lessons Learned

April 24, 2020, Friday

In nine out of the past ten days we have seen a drop in our COVID-19 inpatient census. In fact, we are now at a level not seen since the end of March, when hospitalizations from the virus began to spike. The intensity within our EDs has leveled off and there is more calm where the new normal has taken hold. The curve has been bent and we are now officially on the downslope. This is a tremendous accomplishment and relief, but we are far from done. We urge you not to become complacent or let your guard down as we begin to envision our next steps.

That said, it is fair to say that we are starting to plan for what is next; in the coming days and weeks you may see some changes in your departments as we begin to shift back and change back some of the units we transformed in order to meet this mission. Each step we take will need to be methodical and undertaken with specific purpose. While we all may ache for a return to normalcy, the risk of rushing back too quickly is real and we could potentially find ourselves in a worse place than before. Though we passed an important milestone of more than 3,500 lives saved during this pandemic, there remain over 1,300 souls in our care and they must remain our top priority.

In recent weeks, some of us celebrated Easter and Passover, and yesterday marked the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan. These are important days in these respective religions—times of reflection, remembering, and renewal. We encourage everyone, whether you follow a religion or not, to take some time and reflect on all that has transpired in the past few weeks.

What you have all accomplished is nothing short of miraculous, and we have also learned many lessons. As you reflect, we strongly encourage each of you to embrace and learn from any missteps, not dwell on them, so that we can be better as medical professionals and as people. The emotional scars and vivid memories are things you may carry with you for a long time. What you have all been through is traumatic and can be overwhelming. If you do need help, we again remind you to please reach out and use one of the many [resources](#) we offer. No one is unchanged by this pandemic and no one can do it alone.

If there is one memory that this period will always evoke when we look back at it, it will be one of unity and collaboration. It may sound trite, but we are sincere when we say that we have never seen a group of people come together and unite behind one common goal like you have. It has been our strength since day one and it has been the foundation of every success we have had in this mission. We know we will always have differences—a system of more than 40,000 people is bound to have some challenges and different opinions. But when needed, we all rallied around each other to find a way.

To us, that will always be the defining moment in this crisis: back to back, shoulder to shoulder, you have risen.

Earlier this week Mayor de Blasio announced that once the city is able to reopen, its first public event will be “the largest ticker tape parade in history,” to honor the incredible work of the city’s health care workers and first responders. You deserve it and we will be there to cheer you all on. But, until then, please take a moment to think about all you have accomplished, all the lives you have saved, all the men and women who have stood by you and by whom you have stood. There is meaning and purpose within those memories. The mission continues and together, united, we will stand. Thank you.

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