

Update on COVID-19: Samaritan's Purse

March 31 2020, Tuesday

The Mount Sinai Hospital and the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai were created with the mission to teach, heal, and support our communities. We are here to help our communities during this crisis, and we are committed to saving as many lives as we possibly can with a single-minded focus on the larger good.

To that end, we have partnered with Samaritan's Purse, a nonprofit organization that specializes in helping communities in need when disaster strikes. Through their decades of existence, they have saved countless lives by helping communities face war, famines, environmental disasters, pandemics, and other disasters. They are uniquely prepared to provide medical assistance at a moment's notice all around the world. In fact, Samaritan's Purse was able to build and staff emergency field hospitals in Cremona, Italy, as that community continues to grapple with the devastating COVID-19 outbreak there.

We are aware of concerns about their policies and political positions, especially when it comes to our LGBTQ community. While we have strong differences of opinion with Samaritan's Purse on this issue, this does not detract from our shared mission to save lives in our wonderfully multicultural and diverse city. While many in this nation could have responded to calls for help, Samaritan's Purse not only responded, but did so in a fashion that no other organization could accomplish so rapidly. They have built and staffed a field hospital to save our patients who cannot get the care they need from our overflowing hospitals.

This virus kills people of every religious belief, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation. New York has lost more than 1,000 people already, and more are dying every day. Mount Sinai and Samaritan's Purse are unified in our mission to provide the same world-class care to anyone and everyone who needs it, no questions asked. We are all focused on one thing: saving lives.

As Mayor de Blasio stated: "We are asking hospitals across the city to increase capacity to an unprecedented level because we are facing a crisis where thousands of our neighbors might die. Mount Sinai was able to come to an agreement with Samaritan's Purse to create this facility, and the city offered logistical support. Our record on human rights is clear, and we are confident that the joint effort by Mount Sinai and Samaritan's Purse will save New Yorkers' lives while adhering to the values we hold dear by providing care to anyone who needs it, regardless of background." And that is the truth.

For David, this is especially personal as an LGBTQ person who has experienced decades of anti-LGBTQ sentiments. David believes that the higher mission at present is

to preserve human life. We hope that the vast majority of our faculty, staff, and students will agree and temporarily defer our proud tradition as New Yorkers to question the incentives of those who have come to join us in saving our patients' lives in the face of this unprecedented disaster. We implore you to put aside differences and to join us in this fight against a terrible disease.

With utmost sincerity,

Dennis and David