

FAFP DECEMBER MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

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Sayings to Live Through a Pandemic By

I was privileged to view COVID care from many different angles, as Chief Medical Officer at Halifax Health, I engaged with hospital, community and local and state emergency operations and planning groups. As Family Physician, I engaged in direct patient care, including inpatient and outpatient, virtual, and even a few house-calls. And as mother and wife, I engaged my family. Through it all, I was reminded **every challenge brings opportunity for discovery and creativity.**

For example, one of our hospital's early challenges was where to stage COVID care. We had seen global medical communities quake beneath high volumes of critically ill patients. We watched as New York hospitals quickly filled, reaching crisis levels for staffing, space and supplies. As with other hospitals, we began with a triage tent outside our ED. Beyond this we needed a solution for admitted COVID patients. Indeed, **necessity is the mother of invention.** Our hospital engineer designed a bio containment unit (BCU) from repurposed space. The BCU had outdoor access and full hook ups for each bed. It was served with 100% fresh air, and was the ideal site for isolation and treatment, especially early in this new pandemic. Fortunately, there were no Covid clusters among our BCU staff. We attribute this to its design, along with meticulous use of PPE. To all those in supporting roles, we owe a debt of gratitude. Just as Winston Churchill pled to America just prior to WWII, we relied heavily on those who **"gave**

us the tools, so we could finish the job".

Another challenge was fear/reluctance to engage in direct COVID care. When a local nursing home cluster filled our BCU, our ICU team called for assistance. The hospitalist on call was reluctant, so I offered to meet him in the donning room; from there we divided and conquered. After this, he became an early champion of COVID care among his peers. The following week, more hospitalists engaged, reserving our Intensivists for our most critical COVID patients. Indeed, **many hands make the work light!**

Clinical management was fraught with challenges. Our team cheered as one of our sickest COVID patients walked out of the hospital following his four-month stay. This renewed our zeal in collaborating with the international medical community, building on our collective knowledge and experience. As guidelines evolved, we vetted and disseminated best evidence throughout our organization and into our community, **focusing on facts, not fear.**

Prior to vaccine roll-out we were tasked with making monoclonal antibody (mAb) accessible to the community. Due to early concern for unknown infusion reactions and the desire to minimize COVID exposure in outpatient infusion centers, we developed a workflow whereby patients could receive treatment in our ED. As one of our area's earliest infusion sites, we had patients from hours away. Again, **creativity and thinking**

out-of-the-box can save the day....and a life! I'm confident many hospitalizations were averted, and many lives saved.

This summer, as the delta variant spread, many turned to telemedicine physicians. One particular couple had hunkered down in their home, trusting the outpatient regimen they had been prescribed. The wife shared her husband seemed worse, but was unwilling to go to the ED. As this was a family friend, I teamed up with my brother-in-law for a house call. The husband was late 60s with multiple risk factors and severe COVID pneumonia. With encouragement, our friend was admitted, and returned home 10 days later... alive and well! Indeed, **we get by with a little help from our friends!**

When COVID visited our own home, the wife and mother in me seized the opportunity to reemphasize a healthy lifestyle, including good nutrition (because a **healthy outside starts from the inside**), and **exercise, which is truly good medicine!** As with most young people, both daughters (one vaccinated, the other not) fared well!

Indeed, this pandemic has presented us with the **best of times, and the worst of times.** My hope is that in it all, we remember the lessons learned, and have grown stronger and wiser, better able to face what tomorrow may bring, because (yes, she's doing it again), **you never know what a day may bring!**