



Our future through my rearview mirror

Turn the troubling events of 2020 into opportunities in 2021.

2020 is finally over! It was a meaningful year because we had the opportunity to celebrate The Year of the Nurse and the Midwife. It was also the Year of COVID-19, racial justice protests, and a record number of environmental incidents, including hurricanes and wildfires, affecting millions. So goodbye to 2020, hello to 2021 and the importance of reflecting on the positive impact of these enormous, far-reaching experiences on you, me, and our profession.

One side effect of the pandemic has been the heightened recognition of nurses, caregivers, and first responders. The media highlighted the extraordinary efforts of these professionals, and I believe The Year of the Nurse and the Midwife was even more meaningful because of greater public awareness and praise for the essential role nurses play caring for patients and their families, while putting themselves and their own families at risk.

In case you missed it in November, *American Nurse Journal* released the results of the 2020 annual Nursing Trends and Salary Survey (myamericannurse.com/2020-nursing-trends-and-salary-survey-results), which reminded us that nurses remain a cohesive and collaborative group. Yes, many issues still need to be addressed, but in general the nursing profession has seen progress. It has the infrastructure to continue to make constructive gains in the future. This positive vision was in contrast to the national and regional political landscapes that reflected serious divisions in how local and national leaders view the country and its future.

Another remarkable phenomenon in 2020 was a series of rapid healthcare technology innovations and advancements in nurses' ability to practice at the top of their license. These developments are a direct result of the pandemic driving increased attention to infection prevention and staff and patient safety. One glowing example is the expansion of telehealth and virtual visits. I was amazed to see the remarkable cooperation of all third-

party payors who finally began reimbursing providers and patients for using the technology. Everyone agrees that telehealth and virtual visits are a valuable tool that will continue to be offered in the future.

At the same time, the pandemic created limitations on access to hospitals and physicians' offices, which forced the industry to more fully recognize that nurses are a solution to the access problem. I found it remarkable how quickly restricted rules relaxed so more nurses could care for patients via telehealth and licensed nurses could more easily work across state lines. New ways of using technology are here to stay. For more, check out this web exclusive article on enhancing nursing curriculum with technology at myamericannurse.com/?p=71496.

Looking back at 2020, let's consider implications for 2021 and beyond. Our profession must continue to ensure that the general population understands and appreciates nursing's valuable contributions. Nurse leaders must continue to work hard at improving the work environments where managers and staff labor every day. The pandemic has illuminated the need for increased focus on eliminating communication dysfunction and bullying, promoting education advancement, and tackling the clinical implications of diversity and inclusion issues. One of our must-read featured articles this month is about race correction in health-care (page 5). We also need to continue the progress we've made ensuring nurses can always work at the top of their license, not just during a disaster.

Looking back at 2020 through my rearview mirror, I see many opportunities for the profession should we choose to capitalize on them. This month's journal gives us advocacy and conversation starters for some of these important topics.

Lillie Gelinas, MSN, RN, CPPS, FAAN
Editor-in-Chief

Our profession must continue to ensure that the general population understands and appreciates nursing's valuable contributions.