



Brighter days ahead

Marking one year of the pandemic and nurses' response

We generally think of anniversaries as causes for celebration, as is the case of the American Nurses Association (ANA) reaching a significant milestone this year—125 years of service to nurses.

However, we know that anniversaries also can signify solemn events. That's the case this month, as we mark the 1-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic, a catastrophic global crisis that's left no one untouched, especially nurses and others serving on the front lines.

We have an opportunity to pause and honor nurses for all they've done during this difficult year. When everyone else ran from the storm, you ran directly into it. The world owes you a debt of gratitude for your dedication, your strength, and your sacrifice. In tribute, this month's journal features a special section, *American Nurse Heroes*, which captures nurses' stories of courage and commitment over the last 12 months.

Despite ongoing challenges, I see reasons to be optimistic. One beacon of hope is the availability of vaccines, which marks a turning point in the pandemic. And we can't overstate the importance of nurses as role models, educators, and providers in bringing this life-saving measure to the public.

People must be able to turn to nurses for facts. As the nation's most trusted profession for 19 years running, we have an incredible responsibility to do all we can to stay informed and provide the most up-to-date, accurate information about vaccines and other public health practices that will see us through these trying times.

Personally, last fall I participated in a COVID-19 clinical trial at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. My reasons were twofold: I wanted to help ensure the vaccine's effectiveness and safety for people of color, and I wanted to stand in solidarity with nurses on the front lines. As ANA president, I sought to ease nurses' fears and concerns and alleviate any hesitancy when it came time to receiving the vaccine.

Another reason for optimism is the new administration in Washington, DC. President Biden and his COVID-19 Task Force have made fighting the coronavirus their top priority and hit the ground running, enacting policies to limit virus spread, addressing health disparities, and implementing the Defense Production Act to ramp up production of personal protective equipment and supplies to administer vaccinations. ANA continues to work closely with the administration and the new Congress to ensure nurses' voices are heard and their needs are met.

As the year progresses and we begin to see the number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations going down and the number of vaccinations going up, we still must work through the impact of this pandemic on our well-being. Many nurses have witnessed incredible suffering and loss. Many feel as if their feet aren't on solid ground, and they question what will happen next.

I encourage all nurses to take advantage of the free tools and resources to support your mental health and resilience through the Well-Being Initiative (nursingworld.org/thewellbeinginitiative), launched by the American Nurses Foundation. You'll also find information on vaccines, evidence-based practice, and advocacy initiatives at the ANA Enterprise COVID-19 Resource Center (nursingworld.org/coronavirus) to help you meet short- and long-term challenges.

To nurses everywhere, thank you for your selfless service. We salute you and support you. We're grateful for nurses' immeasurable contributions to the health of our nation as we reflect on the past year and throughout ANA's 125-year history. Please join us as we continue to honor nurses in 2021 (anayeartofthenurse.org).

Change is on the horizon, and I'm optimistic for brighter days ahead.



Ernest J. Grant, PhD, RN, FAAN
President, American Nurses Association

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