

Nurses rise to the challenge

Lessons learned and shared

The past 12 months have challenged the nursing profession like never before. Appropriately deemed the Year of the Nurse by the World Health Organization, 2020 highlighted the contributions of nurse heroes in the midst of an exceptional year. My joint position as a clinical nurse specialist in infection prevention at Duke University Hospital in Durham, North Carolina, and assistant professor at Duke University School of Nursing, has given me the opportunity to see nurses' strengths through different lenses. I've seen first-hand the sacrifices they make to improve the health of our community, students, and each other.

As we mark 1 year of the COVID-19 pandemic, we reflect on the struggles, fears, joys, strength, and perseverance we've encountered. We recall our concerns about how to care for patients with COVID-19 at the beginning of the outbreak. What if we run out of ventilators? What if we don't have adequate personal protective equipment?

Over time, these concerns shifted to other questions: How do we screen employees for COVID-19 symptoms? How do we adequately prepare nursing students who can no longer complete clinicals in hospital and community settings? How do we care for the emotional needs of patients when family and friends can't visit? How do we care for our own personal well-being in these challenging times?

With the COVID-19 vaccine now available and being widely disseminated, we move into a new phase. As we look ahead, we're called to ask what the future of nursing will look like. What are the long-term effects of the pandemic on the profession? Will there be more support for nurses to practice at the top of their licenses? Will telehealth be more readily acceptable? Will interprofessional collaborations with our colleagues be stronger?

Throughout these many unknowns, nurses answered the call by showing us how to navigate these uncharted waters with their submissions to *American Nurse Journal*, both in print and online. As an editorial board mem-

ber, I had the opportunity to read and review many submissions related to COVID-19. I was thoroughly impressed with the ingenuity and fortitude of the nurse authors.

In this special section, we highlight the nurse heroes who showed us how to adapt to the times and deliver care during an unprecedented pandemic. The section includes articles that appeared online during the past year, providing insights and practical advice from different points during the pandemic. Our feature article focuses on nurses who describe how COVID-19 has affected their professional and personal lives and how they think it will impact the future of nursing. You'll also find resources for self-care.

We also want to recognize the many nurses (and other healthcare workers) who have lost their lives to the disease. Their loss deals a blow not only to their friends and families, but to the profession. Who knows what contributions these nurses would have made to nursing had they survived? We can honor them by continuing to deliver optimal care to our patients. (You can submit the names of nurses lost to COVID-19 at the American Nurses Association Nightingale Tribute page: nursing-world.org/ana/about-ana/nightingale-tribute/).

We hope you glean best practices from these articles to implement in your own areas and share with your colleagues. Thank you to the nurse heroes who, in the midst of the pandemic, found time to record their perspectives and practices and share them with our readers.

A portrait of Staci Reynolds, a woman with long, wavy brown hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a red top. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

Staci Reynolds, PhD, RN, ACNS-BC,
CCRN, CNRN, SCRNP