



PRACTICE MATTERS

From Where I Stand

Good-bye and God bless...

Practical hope will create new realities.

By Leah Curtin, RN, ScD(h), FAAN

IT IS WITH SOME TREPIDATION and a great deal of nostalgia that I say good-bye to my role as a contributor to *American Nurse Journal*. Trepidation because I'm leaving at such a dangerous time. The *British Medical Journal* reported that the number of assaults against staff at the Cox Branson Hospital rose from 40 to 123, and the reported injuries rose from 17 to 78. The hospital's patient safety facilitator described the continuing increase in physical assault as "very unnerving." I watch television as little as possible, and almost always with a jaundiced eye, but I've been shocked and appalled in equal measure by the violence nurses and other healthcare workers face today.

I feel nostalgia because nurses and nursing have been very good to me. I will miss all of you terribly, but it's time for me to go. I am, after all, almost 80 years old and it's time (more than time) for younger people to take over.

These past 60 years in nursing have been wonderful—full of changes, progress, and passion. However, during this time healthcare has become a business. Even not-for-profits are run like businesses, using methods such as just-in-time purchasing to reduce costs and market dominance (using aggressive marketing) to ensure that the most patients in an area come to your hospital, resulting in a reduced number of beds. Perhaps that's why there's so much angst and anger—that and the sheer number of deaths from COVID-19. Many people feel surges of antipathy so violent they've actually attacked caregivers.

Obviously, the pandemic has enforced changes in service delivery—just as peoples' vaccine resistance has created resentment over "unnecessary" illness. From one end of the country to the other, healthcare leaders are concerned about low morale, low staffing,

and the adoption of "emergency standards."

In vain, we look for help from our political leaders, but many are making things worse. But no amount of anger, self-pity, or desperate flailing for fast fixes will change the current situation. We need to work ourselves out of despair and look beyond our own trauma, so we can invent a sustainable, hope-filled healthcare system. Anger and resentment build nothing, but they do poison the soul.

The healthcare system we have today is inadequate for the public's need. I don't know or even care what your politics are, but I do know we have to go beyond merely coping and hoping for a savior. We need to reinvent healthcare. To fuel such an adventure, we need down-to-earth, practical self-help—a roll-up-your-sleeves kind of hope. And we need to believe again in the mission, in our professions, in one another, and in ourselves.

In the end, this kind of practical hope will enable us to create new realities. You—all of you—have my trust and affection as you create this new system, a real one that addresses the healthcare needs of Americans better than any we've had before.

And so, I say good-bye and God bless.

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The staff at *American Nurse Journal* thank Dr. Curtin for her contribution and support since the journal was launched. She is an exceptional nurse advocate, and we wish her well.