



A message from Dean Sukhatme

April 10, 2020

In celebration of our residents and fellows:

Our news feed is filled with stories of the heroism of our doctors, nurses and so many others on the care team as we confront the COVID-19 pandemic together. I echo those well-deserved praises—and as the dean of our medical school, I want to take a moment to specifically acknowledge the extraordinary contributions of our residents and fellows, who are among the unsung heroes of this crisis.

When you matched into your residency or fellowship program at Emory, how many of you imagined you'd be fighting a pandemic? Yet here you are, fighting this crisis day in and day out, giving your all to the patients in your care, showing up despite your fatigue, despite your anxiety, and despite many of you having young families at home or parents you're trying to convince to shelter in place.

We recognize the hardships that you face in these challenging times and plans are underway to establish a "COVID-19 Hardship Fund." I have requested the education team to work with department program directors and some of you to operationalize this idea in the near future.

We are fortunate that some of you are documenting your unique perspective and experiences along the way. I've shared two examples below of such articles: one is a heartwarming reflection on life's lessons during challenging times, written by an Emory resident (who chooses to remain anonymous); the other is an altruistic opinion piece for *STAT*, written by two of our infectious disease fellows in the Department of Medicine. I've also included a brief story about a vascular neurology fellow who went above and beyond to support his team. I know that similar stories of collaboration and leadership are happening every day and I encourage you to continue sending them to SOMNews@emory.edu.

As we continue working together to provide the best care to our patients, I am proud and honored to be your colleague. The dedication, compassion, and courage you demonstrate every day is seen and appreciated. On behalf of the entire faculty and staff of the School of Medicine, I stand with you in pride and solidarity, and I thank you for all you do.

Vikas

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Reflections from an Emory resident (anonymous)

Everything has already changed forever. In early to mid-March the collective energy shifted. I felt it – everyone felt it – in the same way we would feel a thunderstorm approaching. Uncertainty, restlessness and fear hung in the air. It woke me up at night; I suspect it woke most people up.

I personally am still living in the calm before the storm. All my patients last month, on Grady wards, miraculously tested negative for COVID-19. Now, I am on COVID Backup and have not yet been called in. I was already a shameless homebody, so even self-isolating feels relatively routine. This is to say, I do not yet have a “COVID” story to tell. However, I have had time to watch and reflect on the upheaval all around me. This reflection felt just as important to write down, as I know it is only a matter of time before I too get sucked into the storm and need the clarity I have at this moment.

Suffering has a purpose, and chaos has a purpose. It never feels this way in the midst of it, but, with time, this always proves to be true. More than once, I have had my personal world turned upside down. The worst time was when my mom was killed in an accident when I was ten years old. Today, I see this personal experience reflected in the experiences of our global collective. The shock, pain, and fear are the same, as is the deep knowing that things will never be as they were.

This sounds very dark, and it is, but what I also know is that the light is still there. My mom’s death had a purpose. Through the shock I learned perspective, through the pain I learned compassion, and through the fear I learned courage. I became a kinder person and better able to serve. My personal statements for both medical school and residency describe how this loss led me into medicine; something I have never been more grateful for. In her death, my mom’s love and presence continued to grace my life in countless ways.

I already see this same light reflected in our residency. We show up to work each day with a strengthened commitment. We ask each other, with a new softness and openness, “How are you doing?” “What are you going through?” and “How can I support you?” We share toilet paper and PPE. We connect, virtually, more than we ever have before. And, without hesitation, we put ourselves at risk each day for the lives of others. Fear still hangs in the air, to be sure, but so does empathy, selflessness and resolve. It has been the most beautiful thing I have ever witnessed, and I feel so privileged to be a part of it.

We have been told the coming months will be rough. We will likely see and do things that we never thought we’d have to face. There will be times of hopelessness, anger and grief. But I have no doubt that together we will learn what I believe is life’s greatest lesson: love is the only constant, and it will always carry us through.



Above: Internal Medicine residents

Protect older and vulnerable health care workers from Covid-19

from [STAT News](#) | March 25, 2020

By Aaron Kofman and Alfonso Hernandez-Romieu, Emory infectious disease fellows

Since the Covid-19 pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus emerged late in 2019, health care workers have been at particularly high risk of infection.

In China, more than 3,300 health care workers have been infected, including Dr. Li Wenliang, who died after being the first to sound the alarm. More than 4,800 health care workers have been infected in Italy, where harrowing stories from Italian physicians and nurses are being posted on social media.

As the pandemic now takes hospitals in the U.S. by storm, two emergency physicians in the states of Washington and New Jersey were recently reported to be in critical condition due to Covid-19.

Social distancing policies are being put in place to protect the oldest and most vulnerable members of society. But they aren't permeating into the health system where many of these same members of society work,

making them as susceptible to severe infection from Covid-19 as the patients they take care of.

[Read more.](#)



Above: Internal Medicine residents

Stories from the front lines

"I wanted to share a brief story about our vascular neurology (stroke) fellow who went above and beyond during our COVID-19 crisis.

Dr. Steve English, (PGY-5, stroke fellow) was rotating at Emory University Hospital where stroke fellows are typically managing acute stroke patients and assisting with the neurohospitalist service.

However, during this time, one of the neurohospitalist attendings became ill and developed a fever. Following precautions protocol at that time, they were staying at home. Dr. English stepped up to fill the void as a "junior attending" under the supervision of the other attending on service at that time, Dr. Jim Greene. He discussed cases with the residents on service, saw the patients and counselled them as needed. He did this for a few days until the other attending recovered. Dr. English's sense of being a team player, dedication, and professionalism allowed for minimum disruption to the service, continued care of patients with neurological issues and maintenance of resident education/supervision."