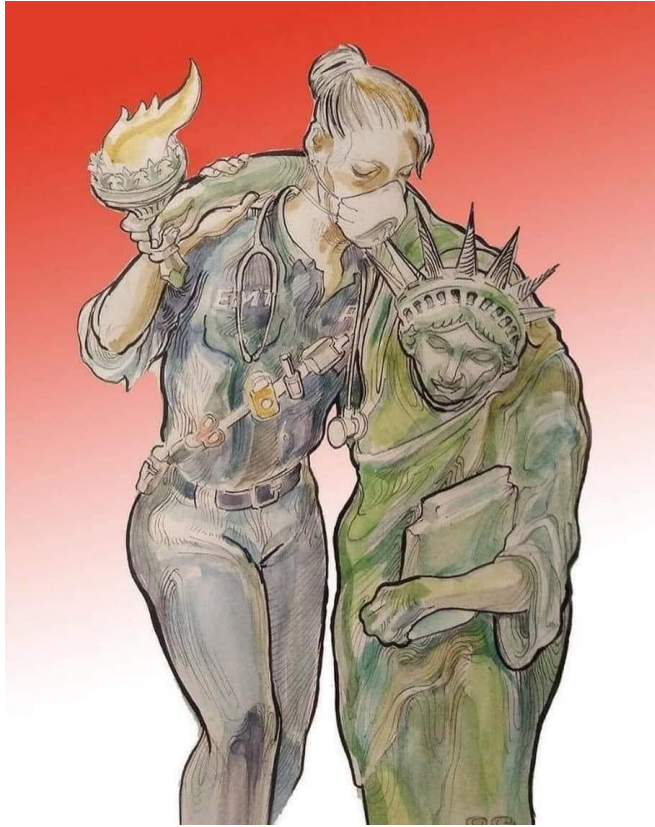


DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY

WEEK OF APRIL 13, 2020



Artwork posted on Twittiverse, unknown source

A Week in Reflection: No Rules and No Roles

As a medical student, I wanted to take care of just one patient who was straight forward, one patient with one problem. I became overwhelmed thinking about how to treat pneumonia in a patient with granulomatosis with polyangiitis, how to address dehydration in a child with Maple Syrup Urine Disease. There were too many problems to balance, which made the primary process foreign and unpredictable. These patients were the first to teach me that “the patient never reads the textbook.”

After working in the 2LICU COVID unit, I can say that no patient is reading the textbook. Rather, these patients are writing it. The volatility of their hemodynamics, ABGs, coagulability, and respiratory status is astounding. In the sickest patients, the physiologic response to this infection is unpredictable and often incomprehensible. The ICU reference I bought before starting this week has sat in my backpack, unopened.

Our team—composed of a cardiology fellow, critical care NP, a CRNA, two anesthesiologists, neuro and cardiac ICU RNs, and me—decided organically and early on that there were “no rules.” Impending shortages of IV sedation made us experiment with outrageous combinations of

entral agents to keep patients calm. We placed lines in prone patients, we used albumin with abandon, we maxed out vent settings quickly, we entertained every differential. In addition to no rules, there were no roles—we pulled on each other’s expertise and skills to take care of every patient and look out for one another.

Instead of feeling overwhelmed by the absence of predictability, I was energized by the chaos, awed by the power of machines, and humbled by the capacities and limits of the human body. Some patients extubated this week. Others died. Each has taught me tremendously about the reason, creativity, and humanity needed to be a good doctor—and just how purely and utterly fun this work can be. -- Katherine Bakke, MD PGY3

Questions for reflection:

1. Consider a time when you felt out of your element—a new job, a foreign country, a confounding patient. How did you feel broaching the unknown? Did you dive in or resist? Did you have to change your strategies to adapt halfway through? Why and how?
2. Why is it that some of the hardest times are often the most satisfying?
3. Although this pandemic has uprooted many of our routines, many good things have emerged as well. What new practices or attitudes do you hope to carry with you when we return to “normal” life?

Perspectives from a Master Surgeon

Becoming a surgeon takes mental and physical strength, and we each have our ways of cultivating the endurance needed to power through an hours-long case or help a junior make sense of a complicated consult. Traditions and practices keep us focused and help foster the tenacity needed to become a master surgeon.



As residents, we have all powered through Fridays with Dr Larkin and been the beneficiaries of her exacting tutelage on how to obtain margins for a lumpectomy or roll a thyroid from the trachea to find the recurrent laryngeal nerve. Here's how she centers herself after a long week:

“Fridays are my OR day. Non-existent right now, but usually busy with cases going into the evening. Starting in the early afternoon, the topic of dinner comes up. *Everyone* in the OR and *all* of the residents know my Friday night dinner routine: Grilled steak (NY strip or T-Bone) expertly prepared by my husband, a perfect baked potato, tossed salad with balsamic vinaigrette dressing, and the most amazing sautéed mushrooms (expertly prepared by me!). All of the preparation is accompanied by the most wonderfully refreshing Gin & Tonic—lots of ice, high quality gin, and a squeeze of fresh lime swirled around the rim of the glass.

I love Fridays. It is my favorite day of the week: With the residents all day in the OR, then home with my family all evening. Lots of hard work and lots of laughter. I can't even tell you when we started this tradition for our Friday dinners, it's been so long. But it makes me feel like all is right with the world. Especially now, when the world just doesn't seem quite right, it is important for all of us to have a bit of a sense of normalcy. Some may call my Friday Dinner boring. I call it peaceful.”

Behind Every Great Surgeon, There Is An Even Greater Admin

I was asked to comment on the great work the Department of Surgery administrative team has been doing during this difficult time. First, I want to say thank you for this opportunity. I have truly been impressed by what our team has done in such a short time to work effectively from home and come to the comfort of patients. I am equally impressed by how we have served to comfort each other in this unsettling time. To me, the Admin team is truly the ‘A’ team.

We often spend our days calling every patient scheduled for surgery or clinic, explaining what many will find is the devastating news of being cancelled or rescheduled. We are often a listening ear to the stories of the patients, who may be alone, have lost work, or are just having a difficult time emotionally with the current state.

We are working hard to maintain schedules and keep our surgeons organized and forward thinking as we race forward with telehealth technology. Leads amongst the admins join daily meetings where they review the ever-changing processes throughout the hospital and share information to help each other with the challenges of not being in the office. In addition, we reach out through technology to lend each other a helping hand across divisions and organize Zoom meetings to keep the comradery intact.

But as we move forward through this crisis, we know we must help our divisions prepare for the next crisis: An estimated 1100 surgeries to reschedule and countless number of tests and appointments to follow up on. We will be there to help you with the most important duty of helping you take the best care of your patients. Your ‘A’ team admins are up to the challenge!

-- Samantha Ortiz, Executive Administrative Assistant



Photo on left: Soraya Takoulas (Senior Admin Secretary, Colorectal Surgery and General Surgery Division) shared a photo of her new workstation. She moved her grandmother's desk into her living room and of course added her own flare with a sequined pillow. Now, she has a sweet reminder of her grandmother and a comfortable new place to work. Photo on right: The "A" Team: Samantha Ortiz and her newest coworker and youngest child, Aria, working hard and taking care of business!

A Moment for Mindfulness

In the last issue, we provided resources for exercise and meditation. Creative expression through writing, music, dance, and the visual arts can be powerful contributors for staying focused and centered. This week, we highlight various artistic contributions of our Department members.



*At the edge of the world, there's still goodness to be found.
Photograph submitted by Katherine Bakke, MD, PGY3*



In a striking reverse of times: Art imitating Life (Left). Portrait (below). Submitted by Janice Lalikos, MD



Apple models grown and contributed by John Castle, MD. Art by Janice Lalikos, MD.

Some great resources for exploring the visual and performing arts:

- Boston Museum of Fine Arts Virtual Tour. Everyone loves John Singer Sargent portraits!
<https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/museum-of-fine-arts-boston>
- A list of virtual museum tours, including the Frick in Pittsburgh, Getty in LA, and the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam:
<https://www.housebeautiful.com/lifestyle/g31815495/museums-you-can-virtually-tour-right-now/>
- As someone who has toured the Musee d'Orsay and The Louvre in the same day, viewing both collections back to back makes you appreciate the radicalism of Impressionism. Tour the Louvre at <https://www.louvre.fr/en/visites-en-ligne> and the Musee d'Orsay at <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/musee-dorsay-paris?hl=en>
- Get your opera on with the Metropolitan Opera Nightly Stream:
<https://www.metopera.org/>
- Free Nikon Photography Classes: <https://www.nikonevents.com/us/live/nikon-school-online/>
- The only thing I know about dance is that it is an astounding reminder of how powerful our bodies can be. Watch videos of the Boston Ballet:
<https://bostonballet.widencollective.com/portals/zzlopocy/Performanceclipsandmore>



Aeron (age 3) enjoying weekend Peloton Cardio Dance!

Shout-outs & Snaps

- ★ I would like to take the time to thank everyone in the department for their immense support for myself and my family this past week. As many might know, my fiancée Kirstie, who is pregnant, was seen at Memorial on Friday after reporting to work with fevers and contractions after exposure as a dialysis nurse to multiple COVID positive

patients. This was a very scary time for us, realizing this COVID pandemic can affect any of us and yet we all continue to report to work to fulfill the oath we took to care for our patients. Thankfully her test came back negative and she has improved with a lot of rest and me at her side taking care of her, which she cannot be more thankful for. We are so grateful for this wonderful team who allowed me without hesitation to focus on my family. I am honored to be a part of this UMASS family and proud to stand in the front line with all of you. Together we stand and together we will win this battle. --Salim Munoz, MD, PGY3

- ★ Salim works hard on every service, and his care for patients shows. Jeff Brady, MD and EM PGY 2, had this to say: “Dr. Munoz was a pleasure to work with during our Trauma rotation. He took ownership of every patient on our service and checked in multiple times a day with patients and nursing to stay up to date. What impressed me most was his positive demeanor, which endeared him to patients as well as his colleagues and nursing staff. I really got the sense that he cared deeply for his patients. One event exemplifying this was when we had an elderly female trauma patient who had fallen. During our trauma assessment, she had said she needed to use the restroom, but this was deferred for more urgent tasks. He made a point about a half hour later to check in on her in the ER to make sure she had the opportunity to use the restroom, and when he learned she hadn't, asked the nurse to assist and personally walked with her there. Although this may seem a small issue, I think it exemplifies his thoughtfulness and the way he put patient's needs first. I'm thankful I had the opportunity to work with and learn from Dr. Munoz.”
- ★ From Lisa McNamara, MS, RN, ACNP and our fearless Trauma Program Manager: “I would like to recognize Dr Simon for all of his leadership. As you know, he just stepped into his new role in January. We continue to have trauma M+M followed by a staff meeting with 100% attendance to check in with all of our team members. This alone is a testament to Dr. Simons’ leadership as well as to developing and implementing a new process every day for trauma.”



Laugh/Cry



"Alice, turn your video on. No, it's the button on the bottom. Not that one, over to your left FFS. Jan, you're on mute. UNMUTE YOURSELF!"



Community Support

Virtual Peer Support drop-in sessions are available to all caregivers to share their experiences and decompress with mutual support and understanding. Sessions will be offered: Monday to Friday, 8 to 8:30 am and 1 to 1:30 pm; Monday, Wednesday and Friday 5 to 5:30 pm. To access the sessions, log in to this Zoom meeting. <https://umassmed.zoom.us/j/108887416>

Caregiver Support Line: Caregivers seeking peer support, family services, mental health resources, spiritual care, help finding online wellness resources, or who just want to talk can call 508-334-HELP.

Submissions

Next week's highlight will be nature. Please send contributions of you and your loved ones gardening, hiking, rock climbing (Dr. Baldor), fishing (Dr. Decio), sunsets, really anything.

Contributions welcome from all of the members of our Department of Surgery, which will be sent weekly through the acute phase of the pandemic. Please send your everyday hero highlights, front line (or even from home) perspectives, reflections, photos, ideas, *ANYTHING* to Katherine Bakke at katherine.bakke@umassmemorial.org or Jennifer LaFemina at jennifer.lafemina@umassmemorial.org