



Director's Desk

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Director

As I write this message, we are near the five month mark of having our lives, both professionally and personally, completely changed by the coronavirus pandemic. This is one of the greatest challenges our organization has ever faced. While it has not been easy, I am so proud of the way all of DHS has adapted and adjusted to meet the needs of this moment. All of you have done whatever is necessary to ensure that our patients and communities receive the extraordinary care that they deserve, under enormously difficult circumstances. And at the same time, it's been so inspiring for me to see the ways in which everyone, across our organization, has banded together to ensure that all of us also remain safe, and to support each other through this protracted crisis. This culture of collaborating with and supporting one another is a powerful way in which we are developing the resilience that has enabled us to rise to the occasion during these past months, and will help to see us through to the other side of the storm.

This issue of the Pulse features various stories about how teams and individuals throughout our organization have been adapting, innovating, partnering, and coping.

- The feature on 'LAC+USC Stands in Support' is an important example of how we can and must stand together

er to address a second pandemic that harms communities. Across the entirety of DHS, we are considering new ways in which our organization can renew and deepen our commitment to **dismantling systemic racism**.

- A number of teams, including Nursing, Patient Access, Population Health and the Ambulatory Care Network, collaborated to rapidly develop and implement a **COVID Nurse Advice Line** to better serve patients during the pandemic. Having this capability can help to shape our 'Better Normal' as we continue to chart our future.
- The efforts of our four medical centers to **serve LGBTQ communities** are so inspiring; the public recognition they've received for this work is cause for celebration.
- You will also read about how healthcare teams from the **US Department of Defense** were deployed to DHS hospitals to supplement our own care teams during the recent COVID surge.
- Our **'We Are DHS'** campaign is another great way to lift up more of these kinds of stories from our front-lines, so that all of us can share in taking pride in this culture of excellence and resilience that we are building together, every day.

These and the other features in this issue represent just a small slice of the amazing and heroic work that all of you perform each day. Please take a few moments to read about these important stories, and let's continue to innovate, share and collaborate as we make our way through this challenge together!

We Are DHS!

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Military Doctors, Nurses and Respiratory Staff Join DHS in Fighting COVID-19

The recent surge in COVID-19 cases has meant that DHS is caring for more patients in our intensive care units, which need to be staffed by specially trained healthcare professionals who care for these acutely ill patients. DHS has been fortunate to have received support recently from the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) in providing physicians, nurses, and respiratory care practitioners qualified to work in ICUs to help supplement our own care teams in order to help us manage this surge.

Military doctors, nurses and respiratory staff were deployed to LAC+USC Medical Center and Harbor-UCLA Medical Center and have played a crucial role in supporting us during this period. We're deeply grateful for their support. Following are some testimonials from DHS leaders at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center and LAC+USC Medical Center that help to tell this story:

"We had a critical need for physicians to help cover our ICU patients and critical events throughout the facility. Our team covers ICU-level patients across 3 floors in addition to constant re-evaluations of the oxygen requirements of COVID-19 patients throughout the hospital. Dr. Aponte's presence in our ICU sends a great message to our staff and patients that the Department of Defense and Air Force recognize the efforts and sacrifice of healthcare workers in LA County's DHS and across Los Angeles."



U.S. Department of Defense crew members during an orientation at LAC+USC Medical Center

"The Respiratory Department is so thankful to have the support of the DoD Respiratory Therapists (RT). The DoD RTs only required two days of orientation and are ready to work independently. Their preceptor said they're bright and picked up our operations quickly. They bring great energy to the Department and we're happy to have them."

"The DoD Physicians have been the consummate professionals. They have jumped right in, started providing care in both the Emergency Department and our hospital wards, and have provided much-needed support to our clinical teams who have been stretched due to the COVID crisis."

"Nursing is grateful for the support and assistance to the front-line nurses that the DoD nursing team has provided. There has been a shortage in the nursing workforce and the military nurses helped close the gaps in staffing. The DoD nurses have been assigned to the ICU ward and ER and have been very flexible and professional. The medical support team's arrival has served as a nice boost to nursing morale."

The support of the DoD in providing us with doctors, nurses and respiratory staff has been instrumental in helping DHS manage this surge. We are deeply appreciative for all their efforts in helping us care for our patients during this crisis. While their time with us may be short, we will forever be thankful for their contribution!

DHS launches a Nurse Advice Line during the COVID-19 pandemic

By Amy Luftig-Viste

COVID-19 came unexpectedly into our lives and the world causing fear, confusion and uncertainty. As infection and death rates increased in Los Angeles County, so did questions from DHS patients about what to do and where to get help. A decision was made by DHS leadership to rapidly create and launch a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week COVID Nurse Advice Line (CNAL), where DHS patients could have their questions and concerns about COVID-19 quickly addressed by a nurse. Staff from the Office of Patient Access (OPA), Population Health Management (PHM) and the Ambulatory Care Network (ACN) quickly coordinated with nursing leadership to reassign and train seventeen Registered Nurses (RNs) to participate in the CNAL, which launched on April 1, 2020.

"In response to a sudden rise in calls from concerned patients with questions related to the pandemic, we were able to very quickly mobilize our in-house experts and realign nursing and other resources to launch the COVID 19 Nurse advice line in record time," shared Debra Duran, Director of Nursing and Education for Population Health Management. *"It was so gratifying to see how quickly we could launch a brand-new program in order to meet the needs of our patients and community during a time of crisis and fear."*

Diana Leyva is the lead RN for the team, working with RNs Guillermina Campos, Naomi Chan, Yueli Xi, Leanne Tran, Teresita Aquino, Lorena Mendez, Veronica Christian, Laura Gomez, Ma Amelyn Mendoza, Maria Ella Anas, Akberet Gedle, Kimana

Nunez, Lillian Fernandez, Diana Leyva, Vanessa R. Chavadi and Irene Ramirez. The CNAL is led by Fiorella Arcidiacono, Supervising Staff Nurse of the Office of Patient Access.

"During these ever-changing times, the CNAL has demonstrated to be an excellent avenue for patients to obtain the latest information to their questions regarding COVID-19. These compassionate, experienced RNs provide reassurance and a sense of calm during these uncertain times," said Fiorella. *"I am very grateful to have a team that is open, willing and ready to adapt to this constantly changing environment."*

The CNAL has successfully prevented a flooding of DHS primary care clinics and emergency rooms with questions or medical concerns that can be handled by a nurse. For example, in the month of April alone, CNAL nurses responded to almost 700 patient calls specific to COVID-19 questions and symptoms and provided general information about COVID-19 to another 250 more. In addition, CNAL nurses helped 150 DHS patient better understand their instructions related to home isolation, home quarantine and "Safer At Home" orders. Another 220 DHS patients were directed to their primary care provider, PCMH or emergency department.

The CNAL is likely to see an increase in COVID-related inquiries in the coming weeks and months as DHS raises awareness about the CNAL by sending 99,000 emails and 180,000 text messages to English and Spanish speaking DHS patients about the phone resource. There is no doubt that CNAL will continue to support our patients and the community during these challenging and uncertain times.



All four DHS hospitals receive the honor of LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Top Performer

By Janine Roach, MD

Over the past two years, Olive View-UCLA, Harbor-UCLA, LAC+USC and Rancho Los Amigos worked hard to earn the honor of "LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Top Performer" in the National Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) for 2019-2021. The Healthcare Equality Index requires facilities to meet four core objectives: ensure foundational protection for visitors, staff and patients, encourage inclusion in LGBTQ patient care, provide LGBTQ-inclusive support and benefits to ensure an inclusive workforce and show public commitment to the LGBTQ communities.

The HEI Index is sponsored by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC). Their mission statement states, *"The Human Rights Campaign Foundation is the educational arm of America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people. HRC envisions a world where LGBTQ people are embraced as full members of society at home, at work and in every community."*

The four DHS facilities accomplished this designation by providing training for staff, as well as amending non-discrimination policies for patients, visitors and employees. Facilities worked to improve LGBTQ patient services and support by providing services for the LGBTQ community, offering gender neutral restrooms, ensuring gender affirming treatments are available to patients and publicizing external LGBTQ resources. The committees also ensured there are adequate protections for LGBTQ employees, and health insurance available with gender affirming treatments. All four facilities also worked to reach out to the LGBTQ community by sponsoring health fairs, attending events, creating patient surveys, which allow LGBTQ people to self-identify and comment on the care they

received at the hospital, and working with local LGBTQ organizations.

This work was accomplished by the LGBTQ Committees at each of the 4 hospitals, which worked together to share resources and ensure they had met all criteria. These committees are chaired by Dr. Janine Roach, Kristin Winn and Mary Schafer-Moya at Olive View-UCLA, Hudson Tibbetts and Dr. Tracey Samko at LAC+USC, Lily Wong and Cristina Martinez at Rancho Los Amigos, and Dr. Clinton Coil and Susan Newsom at Harbor-UCLA. They depended on the members of their respective committees to help accomplish this honor, as well as cooperation by the facilities to make policies more inclusive, encouraging the completion of hospital-wide LGBTQ surveys for staff, completing trainings, creating county-wide patient satisfaction surveys and creating public-facing websites.

The DHS LGBTQ Committees continue to strive to provide a safe and welcoming environment for patients, visitors and staff of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Each year they will continue to build on their accomplishments and provide trainings and resources for patients and staff. For more information regarding LGBTQ efforts at each facility, please refer to the DHS websites.

Harbor-UCLA: <https://dhs.lacounty.gov/harbor-ucla-medical-center/lgbtq-friendly-and-knowledgeable-providers/>

LAC+USC: <https://dhs.lacounty.gov/lacusc/lgbtq-friendly-and-knowledgeable-providers/>

Olive View: <https://dhs.lacounty.gov/oliveview/lgbtq-health-information/>

Rancho Los Amigos: <https://dhs.lacounty.gov/rancho/policies/>



We are sharing stories; We Are DHS!

By Omar Zoheri with stories by Angela Gardner, Jasmine Eugenio, MD and Jordan David, MD

There are countless stories of DHS employees going above and beyond during these extraordinary times. For example, Julia Mockeridge, a physical therapist and mother of three, volunteered to come in on her day off to work with a patient with Covid-19 so that the "patient could have a win" during their treatment session.

Over the last several months, a medical tent village has been established outside of Martin Luther King, Jr. – Outpatient Center (MLK-OPC). The village was created to keep patients safe and for the protection of the staff as well. The village is maintained and staffed by volunteers from various disciplines within DHS and "is a haven for a community dealing with the stark reality of an illness and its uncertainty. It brought together our staff and our patients. It's a solidifying force in our community," said Dr. Jasmine Eugenio.



According to Dr. Jordan David, in the days and weeks after the pandemic began "resident physicians in the LAC+USC Department of Psychiatry conceived of, designed and implemented a volunteer peer support hotline to support all medical center staff who have been impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic." Staff were offered a 30-minute conversation with a mental health provider to help deal with stress by speaking to someone who understood what they were going through.

These are just a few of the stories that have been collected out of the countless incidents of excellence that have happened in the last few months within the DHS community. The *We Are DHS* campaign was started to celebrate, accelerate and reinforce the work of the DHS community. Our workforce is showing up and working hard every day to serve our patients and communities despite challenging conditions. We wanted to create a galvanizing message to reflect and amplify these collective actions. The campaign's goal is to collect stories from across the community and to create a platform for the DHS community to feel connected to one another.

We want to shine a light on the amazing work happening across our system. While the *We Are DHS* campaign began during a pandemic, we intend for this campaign to persist for years to come



and to continue collecting and magnifying positive stories supporting the individuals saving lives throughout the County.

This is the time to recognize one another for living the mission of DHS, "to advance the health of our patients and communities by providing extraordinary care." If you have witnessed an individual or team going above and beyond the call of duty, please complete the following questionnaire.

We are Dedicated. We are Here together. We are Saving lives. **We Are DHS!**

Share your stories of inspiration: https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=SHJZBzjqGoWKvqY47dusgfor7gQTpndPitOB_vrHMQFUMUIHSVBKNoxBWIIISUFQ2VoRSTENORVo2Qy4u

We Are DHS SharePoint: <https://lacounty.sharepoint.com/sites/DHS-WeAreDHS>

LAC+USC stands in support

On June 5, 2020, LAC+USC leadership held an event in solidarity against systemic racism and social injustice. Jorge Orozco, CEO of LAC+USC and Valda Carter, Clinical Nursing Director of LAC+USC spoke in deeply personal terms about the community's shared grief over the death of George Floyd and so many others who have died under unjust circumstances. They also stated their determination to continue working against systemic racism and social injustice on a personal and professional level. On the same day, DHS facilities systemwide observed 8 minutes and 46 seconds at noon together in solidarity and participated in similar activities to address these important issues.



Spiritual Care in the time of COVID-19

By: Fr. Chris Ponnet, BCC, MA, MTh, Director Department of Spiritual Care LAC+USC Medical Center

Spiritual Care at LAC+USC Medical Center continues 24/7 with our chaplains endorsed and funded by the Catholic Archdiocese, Presbyterian Consortium and Episcopal Diocese. Unfortunately, during this pandemic our 30-plus community clergy persons are not allowed in the hospital based on visitor policy in place at this time.

Normally, we are here to pull up a chair and be attentive listeners and story catchers. We are part of all the units throughout the hospital and the Department of Emergency Medicine (DEM). We have added chaplain visits to our outpatient infusion area during this time of low census. Our presence during the pandemic has taken us to a conscious and expanded presence and support to all medical staff in these days of stress and uncertainty. With the visitor limitations, we as chaplains are making sure to add support to family either outside the building or on the phone. We have added a weekly Wednesday 9:00 a.m.-9:30 a.m. "Praying for you" presence – look out your windows and you will see us with posters reminding you that we are praying for you.

Over the last years, we have doubled our presence in the DEM and ICU and this remains in place with this pandemic reality. One of the gifts we bring to the bedsides and the community on a daily basis is a sense of calm and truth seeking. When some are saying the pandemic is a hoax, we are here to testify about our staff and patients' reality of life and death. When nurses in the USA are having to stand up to crowds demanding to lessen the stay at home orders, we are here with them saying the "truth sets you free." When families drop off their patients at our Emergency Department not knowing if and when they will see their loved ones next, we have added a letter of welcome along with a number to call the hospital for information and our chaplains office if we can offer support.

TOGETHER we will move forward. TOGETHER we will hold up those who have died here in LA and globally. TOGETHER we celebrate the millions around the world who have survived and returned to their communities. TOGETHER we will be instruments of compassion, truth, faith, hope and love.



What does Just Culture mean now?

By: Arun Patel, MD and James 'Garr' Wharry, RN

This newsletter comes during much turmoil and great concern for the safety of our communities for multiple reasons, and we acknowledge how hard this time has been for everyone. Even with so many things in flux these days, some priorities need to remain in place and continue to develop. Creating a just culture is one of them, and it remains a priority for our leadership and our labor partners.

Remember that a just culture is one in which people are focused on learning, fairness and consistency, safe system design and making and managing choices. At the frontline level, a just culture is fueled by transparency. When things don't seem right, speak up, but also be willing to develop solutions with your team and management. Managers and supervisors should remember that a just culture requires fair accountability. While individuals are accountable for their actions, they should not be blamed for issues out of their control. Finally, leaders must be willing to consistently

examine and improve systems in support of a culture of collaboration within all levels of the institution.

Rapid and significant changes are being made across DHS to accommodate our current situation.

They won't always be right the first time, or maybe even the second time, and sometimes they will have significant impact on people. So now more than ever, the value of being kind and fair towards one another while keeping a sharp eye out for system failures cannot be overstated.

Over the last couple of years, we have put together a number of materials to help people learn about Just Culture and to ensure that it is applied appropriately. If you need a refresher, you can find the materials at the links below.

- Basics of Just Culture and eLearning Game via [Learning Net](#)
- [Just Culture Resources and Toolkit – Just Culture Sharepoint site](#)

Questions? Email justculture@dhs.lacounty.gov

