COMMENTARY | POINT OF VIEW

One physician offers this poem, which may strike a chord for many others on the front lines of Minnesota health care.

How can we?
How can we avoid doing harm when our patients put themselves in harm's way to see us?

How can we provide a safe environment when we must become socially not distant?

How do we create a normal encounter when our expressions are masked and our eyes guarded?

How does a virtual visit compare when we cannot auscultate, palpate, or visualize with scopes and lenses?

How can we reassure our patients when our medicine and Medicine can harm as well as heal?

How can we do our part when we need to flatten rather than steepen the curve?

How do we give the answers when the questions elude even the experts?

How can we do anything else?

Justin Yamanuha, MD, is assistant professor in the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Neurosciences, University of Minnesota.

Send your thoughts and ideas

In coming issues, Minnesota Medicine will dive deeper to explore the impact of COVID-19 on Minnesota’s physicians. We invite your anecdotes about how you have coped with dramatic change in your practice, your thoughts about what comes next for you and your patients, your “heroes” during this pandemic and your ideas about lessons learned for health care in Minnesota. Send your thoughts and ideas to Linda Picone, editor, Minnesota Medicine, lpicone@mnmed.com.

Coronavirus, medicine and life

It seemed as if everything changed virtually overnight.

Physicians—and patients—figured out telehealth (and insurers figured out how to reimburse for it). Surgeries, some on the schedule for months, were canceled. Some clinics were closed altogether. Some physicians were idled, or nearly so, others were working more than ever, in personal protective equipment, constantly worrying about whether they would become ill and/or bring illness home to their families.

And everyone engaged in health care in Minnesota is worried about how to survive financially going forward. Even if the world bounced back to what it looked like before January of this year—it cannot and will not—the economic hit of the months of social distancing will not be overcome quickly, possibly not for years.

Coronavirus and the disease it causes, COVID-19, have had an extraordinary impact on the U.S. health care system—and the lives of everyone in the country. At the time this issue of *Minnesota Medicine* went to press, Minnesota was still under Gov. Tim Walz’s “stay at home” order. By the time you receive this issue, that order may have lapsed, or been extended, or we may be beginning a staged reopening process. That kind of uncertainty is what makes the situation so hard to manage.

— Linda Picone, editor, Minnesota Medicine

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