

The Healing Ministry of Christ during the Pandemic of 2020

Janice G. Murphy, MSN, FACHE
President and CEO



ST. VINCENT CHARITY
MEDICAL CENTER

A Ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System

Introduction and Career Overview

An intersection of medicine and faith

- Career in medicine began in the convent as a **Sister of Notre Dame**
- Executive leadership roles at **Cleveland Clinic**:
 - Chief Operating Officer Regional Hospitals and Family Health Centers
 - COO of Sheikh Khalifa Medical City in Abu Dhabi
 - President of Cleveland Clinic Fairview Hospital and Cleveland Clinic Lakewood Hospital
 - Senior Vice President and COO of Cleveland Clinic Fairview Hospital
 - Chief nursing officer of Cleveland Clinic Fairview Hospital
- November 2018 joined the **Sisters of Charity Health System** as Senior Vice President of Mission and Ministry
- Named President and CEO of **St. Vincent Charity Medical Center** in August of 2019
- As of January 2022, will step into the role of President and CEO of the Sisters of Charity Health System

Mission of St. Vincent Charity Medical Center

In the spirit of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, the St. Vincent Charity Medical Center family is dedicated to the healing ministry of Jesus.

As Caregivers we serve with a deep respect for the dignity and value of all persons, we are focused on quality care, dedicated to the poor and committed to continuing education.

Overview of St. Vincent Charity Medical Center

Centers of Excellence

- Spine and Orthopedic Institute
- Center for Bariatric Surgery
- Behavioral Health and Addiction Treatment

Community

- Located in downtown Cleveland
- Central neighborhood
- Highest poverty rate in the city

Caregivers

- Being at caregiver at St. Vincent Charity is different from other medical centers
 - Our caregivers serve a mission **devoted to a higher calling**
 - Our dedication to serve with **a deep respect for the dignity and value of all persons** extends to our fellow caregivers
 - We understand that our dedication to providing high quality care begins with the way we treat one another

Today's discussion

Navigating the Covid-19 pandemic as Catholic hospital:

- How to continue to deliver the healing ministry of Christ to our patients and the surrounding community?
- How to support the wellbeing of our caregivers?
- How to incorporate extreme safety measures while preserving our focus on dignity and compassion?

The Beginning: Finding courage in chaos

He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

Psalm 91:4

At the beginning of the pandemic, the world changed overnight:

- **March 14, 2020** – Cleveland has first confirmed Covid-19 case
- **March 17, 2020 (St. Patrick's Day)** – Ohio Governor Mike DeWine issues mandate to stop all elective surgeries
- **7 a.m. on March 17** – went to operating rooms to tell staff majority of surgeries would stop immediately
- **100 people were there in scrubs, ready to begin their day and everything stopped**

This was when we entered the unknown:

- St. Vincent Charity relies on elective surgeries to continue delivering the mission of the Sisters
- Cancelling surgeries without knowing when we could resume was extremely difficult to reckon with, **but as a Catholic hospital we put our faith in God**
- **Immediately turned to Psalm 91**, it became our spiritual antidote to Covid-19 and gave us inner strength as we headed further into this storm.

This was when we entered the unknown:

- St. Vincent Charity relies on elective surgeries to continue delivering the mission of the Sisters
- Cancelling surgeries without knowing when we could resume was extremely difficult to reckon with, **but as a Catholic hospital we put our faith in God**
- **Immediately turned to Psalm 91**, it became our spiritual antidote to Covid-19 and gave us inner strength as we headed further into this storm.

Managing emotions and fear became a full-time job:

- **Early on the fear was palpable.** People were getting so many **mixed messages** from the media, the government, national and international health organizations.
- **A great example is masks.** Initially, the fear was that we wouldn't have enough protective equipment for the clinical staff. The CDC was saying we did not need masks.
- During rounds people were begging to wear masks and but the supply wasn't there and the experts said masks wouldn't help.
- Finally, it got to a point where we gave out masks, only so people just feel safe even if they don't help.

One our first pandemic miracle moments: Esperanza Threads

- Just when we decided to allow staff to wear masks, to calm their fears, a group called Esperanza Threads contacted us. They started sewing cloth masks for the caregivers. **They made St. Vincent Charity more than 2,000 masks.**
- Esperanza Threads is a non-profit located in the city of Cleveland, Ohio that provides industrial sewing and job readiness training to low-income individuals.
- Esperanza Threads was founded by Sister Mary Eileen Boyle of the Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland. When the Ursuline Sisters arrived in Cleveland, the Sisters of Charity provided helped them get settled. The Ursuline's never forgot the generosity of the CSA's and Sister Mary Eileen notes the masks for St. Vincent were another token of appreciation.
- Just a few weeks later, the CDC mandated masks and cloth masks were not to be worn in clinical areas so we had to adjust again.

With no clinical playbook available, we looked to our history:

- Staff were not only challenged with their personal emotions and fears about the virus, but **there was no playbook on how to care for COVID patients.**
- **It was as much an art as a science.** Our caregivers watched, and talked to their colleagues, not just here but across the country, and we learned and we adjusted every time more information was available.
- **Our founders, the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, were here in this same building caring for patients during the 1918 pandemic.**
- Reading their notes from that pandemic, **it was the same things we were hearing in 2020:**
 - No gatherings. Stay home. No church. No funerals.
 - In an odd way, it was comforting to know that our hospital, our neighbors, our Sisters of Charity had been through this before and persevered.
 - They wrote about what hard times they had, but also that they came together in ways that were unimaginable.

Our history, become our inspiration:

- The Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine wrote about the hard times they had, but also that they came together in ways that were unimaginable.
- In many ways that is our story.
- As we developed a new normal we continued to be guided our faith and our foundresses.

A New Normal: Keeping our balance

If you say, “The Lord is my refuge,” and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.

Psalm 91:9

Providing “Care Beyond Medicine” in a socially distanced world:

- At St. Vincent Charity we refer to “Care Beyond Medicine” to describe our compassionate care, focus on human dignity, and the many ways we support our neighbors in the community. This is crux of our mission as a hospital, the healing ministry of Jesus is more than just meds and beds.
- The pandemic brought many tough decisions and we **had to weigh safety precautions with providing a compassionate, healing experience for patients.**
- Restricting visitation was one of the toughest.
 - Many hospitals completely stopped all visitation.
 - Our nursing and clinical teams recognize how important it is for both the patient and the family to be present during a hospital stay.
 - Our staff rearranged waiting areas and found available space throughout the hospital to avoid forcing families to wait in their cars.
- **Allowing for, and anticipating, exceptions** became the rule.
 - We had to be flexible and make decisions based on each individual situation. One blessing of being a small hospital. Example: allowing for overnight visitation for the Amish population. Also making exceptions for end of life situations.

More miracle moments: Delivering Pastoral Care in a pandemic

- As a Catholic hospital, we have a robust pastoral care team and have a pastoral care training program onsite. The chaplains proactively do rounds in patient rooms, deliver the Eucharist and provide prayer and comfort to patients and families.
- When visitation limits became restricted the team was determined not to sacrifice this essential service.
 - Purchased iPads to allow for face-to-face communication with patients. They also assisted patients with face-timing family members.
 - The chaplains learned how to don and doff PPE and while room visits were reduced, they still provided human touch when possible.
- Daily Mass in the Holy Trinity Chapel had to stop. Chaplains delivered prayer over the house wide PA system.

What to do when togetherness is part of the treatment?

- There was a **significant impact to our behavioral health and addiction treatment** patient population.
- Group meetings on our inpatient units had to be significantly restricted and limited.
- General visitation to the hospital was restricted so AA meetings hosted at the hospital had to be paused.
- Our caregivers once again were faced with challenges and change but found a way.
- **Virtual group meetings were held and telehealth** was introduced for appointments.
- It was essential for us not to let this extremely vulnerable population be forgotten or put aside despite the restrictions put in place.

Miracle Moments: Love Thy Neighbor

- At the start of the pandemic staff were terrified of taking the virus home to their families. The **Sisters of Charity opened their home, the convent located in the hospital, for staff to stay in.** The residents gladly took this opportunity and stayed in the convent in between shifts.
- During the mandate to stop surgeries, we had to furlough staff. Realizing the hardship this created, our **Mission and Ministry Office began a Special St. Vincent Fund to support furloughed caregivers.**
 - Fellow caregivers, medical staff, leadership and community members gave to the fund. Caregivers gave their tax returns to help their coworkers.
 - The fund has raised more than **\$73,000** and paid out more than **\$60,000** to our caregivers in need.

Miracle Moments: Love Thy Neighbor

- Trying to support the well-being of caregivers and provide updated information became a challenge as gathering had to stop.
 - No more gathering for holidays, celebrating awards, meetings all went to zoom.
 - We began doing Miracle Moments videos to try to connect with staff and offer updates as well as “miracle moments” offering hope and a sense we will get through this together.
- Community stepped up with food donations and thank you’s to staff and that show of support and recognition really lifted spirits.

Miracle Moments: Love Thy Neighbor

- The Central community, in which we are located, was hit very hard by the pandemic. One of the nation's poorest neighborhoods, many in the community take advantage of St. Vincent as a place to get a warm, affordable meal. This had to stop when we could no longer allow general visitation.
 - Our food and nutrition staff created Mission Meals. They used online ordering from caregivers to raise funds to provide family style meals in the community.
 - Partnering with the neighborhood housing development, they have delivered more than 900 Mission Meals to families in Central.

Miracle Moments: Love Thy Neighbor

- Our community outreach staff also began a new **Food Pantry** program this year.
 - Partnering with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, we hosted food and household good distribution monthly throughout the spring and summer.
 - More than **800 individuals were served during the program**. Many of our caregivers faced with fatigue and staffing shortages still volunteered their time to help every month.
- Christmas – changed for us, tree lighting, no tears for Christmas
- Halloween – outside, support families

Miracle Moments: Continuing Care Beyond Medicine to the Community

- Christmas changed for us. We usually do a **caregiver Christmas dinner and tree lighting with families and community**. We did a smaller celebration with only caregivers and very socially distanced outside.
- For more than 20 years, our community outreach team had done a program called **No Tears for Christmas where we take Santa Claus to the neighborhood schools and distribute gifts**.
 - Schools were remote by they still found a way to distribute gifts with a drive-through Santa visit.
- **Halloween trick-or-treat is another annual tradition at St. Vincent Charity that had to be adjusted**. Instead of welcoming families and schools into the hospital for trick-or-treat we hosted the event outside and expanded it into a wellness fair for adults as well. It was a huge success and we received grant funding to host it again this year.

Renewed hope: Vaccination arrives

“Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

Psalm 91:14

Vaccines bring more change with no playbook and many Miracle Moments

- When news of the vaccine was released it was like a cloud lifted throughout the hospital.
- Our pharmacy, nursing, telecommunications, facilities and infection prevention caregivers put together a plan for the vaccination clinic and made it operational within a few days. Again, adjusting to a brand new treatment playbook.
- The environment in the vaccine clinic was like a party. People were clapping, cheering, literally dancing and jumping for joy.
- We made arrangements for many local church groups, priests and retired priests, nuns and police officers to receive their vaccines in a group setting.
- Because of the high demand for the vaccines, administering them to the public became a great PR opportunity for St. Vincent Charity as we welcomed many people who had never been to the hospital.

Total vaccines administered (1st and 2nd doses): **9,462**

Total vaccines wasted Dec. – May: **150**

Our pharmacy staff went 4 months without wasting one single dose!

Closing

He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.

Psalm 91:15

When people look back on this pandemic it will be another story of courage and commitment, just as it was in 1918

— All of our caregivers showed courage during the unknown, commitment to patient care, commitment to each other, the entire community came together to lift each other up.

Doctors Nurses Respiratory Therapists Food and Nutrition

Pharmacy Environmental Services Community Outreach

Plant Operations Infection Prevention Emergency Management

Telecommunications

Everyone

Psalm 91

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.

He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.

A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

If you say, "The Lord is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him my salvation."