

Message from the Dean

Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long School of Medicine



LSOM Community,

Our country seems to be falling to pieces in front of us - no vaccine or drug for COVID-19 as the pandemic continues, a reporter of color arrested live on national news, an African American jogger and an arrestee both killed, resulting in peaceful protests and violent riots. My emails and texts have been filled with these issues from many of you. Let me be very clear- the LSOM stands against racism and all violence based on race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or any other aspect of diversity.

I watched the reporter being arrested and I became angry. I watched George Floyd being choked, and I was horrified. Because of all the national chaos and hurt, I had the cable news on Sunday while I added references to a COVID-19 grant proposal I was preparing, but slowly as the day went on, I tuned out the current events. After a while, it all blurred together, the horrifying nature of what is happening became less and less important to me. I became numb, and I stopped caring. When I realized that, I was afraid of what I was becoming, and I was disappointed in myself.

As Carlos Rosende said to me, “The human ability to turn off emotion and focus on the task at hand in a crisis—we can remain cool and collected dealing with an unstoppable bleeder in a trauma case—crosses the line when we can’t bring back the humanity that drove us to a life of service, whether in medicine, education, the military or law enforcement.”

Health care starts with caring. We all work or train in the Long School of Medicine because we believe we can make a difference somewhere, at some time to someone’s health. If we lose that heart of caring, that causes us to hurt when someone else hurts and rejoice when our patient walks out of the hospital better, then we lose our souls, we lose our identity, and we become worse at what we do. The capability to feel sad or horrified about the harm someone else is experiencing or feel happy when you prescribe the right therapy and the patient improves is crucial to who we are. It motivates us, it bonds us, it makes us more creative, and it makes us more human.

How does this relate to the nation’s pain right now? We need to beware of becoming numb, to be able to still care, and live that caring out every day. What does that look like? It means holding another’s hurts or joys as important or more important than our own. It means that when we see harshness or harm, we take the time to become involved and say something such as, “I am sure if you thought about that, you would want to say something else” or “That statement disrupts the medical care the team can provide” or any of a thousand ways to pull us together as a team and maintain the care for our patients and for each other. Caring for our patients starts with caring for each other, but it does not stop with us and our patients, it also means caring for our community. Like the LSOM faculty who are leading the fight against COVID-19 in our community, we can also show our community what caring for all looks like.

I discussed this with the Dean’s Cabinet; Chiquita Collins, Deborah Conway, Shelly Evans, Gabe Hernandez, Scott Jones, Jennifer Potter, Carlos Rosende, and Janet Williams. We, as a team, fully commit to equal treatment of all regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or any other aspect of diversity.

There will be a statement issued later today from our Office for Inclusion and Diversity that will offer an opportunity for sharing concerns and ways to become more involved. Please feel free to connect with any of us on the Cabinet to share your own comments and to suggest ways we can make a difference together.

We as a community must never become numb and walk away, but rather stand together against suffering in all its forms.

Rob

Robert Hromas, MD

Dean

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