

Saluting our brave health care workforce in a time of thanks

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President

As we pause this week for Thanksgiving, let me express my sincere gratitude and admiration for the physicians, nurses and all frontline health care workers who have shouldered so much over the past 19 months, and who will remain in harm's way until this pandemic ends.

Through case surges and variants, through periods of high stress and loss, you have risen above and beyond in service to your patients and communities. And you have done so at great personal risk to yourselves and your loved ones.

While COVID-19 has tested all of us, no one has endured more than the brave men and women who staff our nation's hospitals, emergency departments and intensive care units. It is because of them—and the tireless work of research scientists who developed vaccines against COVID-19 in record time—that we remain optimistic about the future, and that we may soon put the worst of the pandemic behind us.

To salute our courageous colleagues, the AMA, American Hospital Association and American Nurses Association launched a new television and digital ad campaign that will run in English and Spanish through the holiday season.

This fall, as COVID cases surged in my home state of South Carolina, I had the opportunity to meet many of the young physicians and residents responding to the pandemic in my local community hospital. What I saw and experienced during my 100-hour, seven-day teaching rotation left me in awe of those who have answered the call in this historic moment but also deeply concerned about the lasting impact of COVID on our health care workforce. Make no mistake, physicians and health care workers have experienced profound physical and emotional trauma during this pandemic, and it's impossible to determine how that will shape medicine moving forward.

Must keep standing with science

The best we can do for our frontline personnel, our overextended health care system, and our country in this moment is to continue to strongly encourage all those who have not yet become vaccinated against COVID-19 to do so. We should encourage those needing booster shots to get one. We should encourage parents to have their children over age 5 vaccinated against this virus. And we must continue to stand on the side of science, evidence and data against the storm of misinformation that has complicated our response to COVID-19 from the beginning.

The approaching holiday season is expected to add another somber and deadly chapter in a pandemic that has already killed more than 750,000 people in the U.S., including hundreds of friends and colleagues across health care. We need to protect ourselves and those we care about with the best defense we have against this virus—vaccination. And we need to call on others to do the same so that we may approach the new year with renewed hope that we can defeat COVID-19 once and for all.

Thank you. Thank you for your bravery and dedication. Thank you for your compassion. Thank you for your tireless work in the face of this deadly virus. My thoughts and prayers are with you and yours this holiday season.