

## True Health Care Heroes in a Historic Crisis

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Our hospitals and their frontline staff have always been a source of hope and care in our communities. But this has perhaps never been more true than over the past two-plus years. With little warning, hospitals worldwide were hurled headlong into the COVID-19 pandemic — the biggest health crisis in generations, with Los Angeles County one of the hardest-hit areas for a time. Throughout it all, frontline hospital staff in Southern California have never wavered in their commitment to our communities.

Like the rest of the world, health care workers had to navigate brand new territory — but their path was harder than most. The pandemic brought floods of patients that challenged hospitals' capacity, a global scarcity of health care supplies and protective equipment, severe staffing shortages and the trauma of caring for desperately sick people. Guidance from public health agencies changed weekly, even daily. And throughout the onslaught, these health care heroes were expected to lead the way. All of these factors have put enormous financial, staffing, and emotional strain on our hospitals and their teams.

Little wonder that our hospital teams are exhausted, physically and mentally. Frontline workers are suffering high rates of burnout and anxiety, including 78% of psychiatrists surveyed who self-reported burnout. And a recent [study](#) in the Journal of General Internal Medicine found that early in the pandemic, doctors, nurses, first responders and other health care staff underwent mental health distress at levels similar to what soldiers experience in combat zones.

Yet in spite of overwhelming circumstances, our health care teams have held the line in their dedication to keeping communities healthy and safe. And even as the virus keeps evolving, these essential caregivers fight on. With remarkable resilience and commitment, they continue adapting to ever-changing conditions and ongoing surges.

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**In 2020 alone, SoCal hospitals  
cared for more than 250,000  
COVID-19 patients.**

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In the face of myriad challenges, our hospitals have made striking progress in both fighting a pandemic and preparing for future ones. They've strengthened relationships with local public health departments, emergency services, elected officials, neighboring hospitals, and community members. These partnerships have been vital in the collective mission to keep our communities safe and healthy: providing ongoing guidance to residents; quickly converting nontraditional care locations into patient care units and community vaccination clinics; and discharging thousands of recovered COVID-19 patients back to their homes.

In addition to tirelessly caring for residents, hospitals have also found ways to support their extraordinary health care workforces. They've provided childcare benefits; given incentives and bonuses to staff taking additional shifts; and offered hotel stays and housing vouchers to help employees avoid infecting their families. As new virus variants emerge, our hospitals must stay on the alert and continue to work closely with community partners to improve response systems, address the acute workforce shortage, and staunchly support their personnel.

And as we transition from pandemic to endemic, their dedicated staff continue the mission of restoring us to better health. Our courageous and compassionate hospital caregivers deserve our ongoing gratitude for all they do to help care for and heal our communities — not just during the pandemic, but 24/7, every day of the year.

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