

Fall Newsletter 2018: Leaders DO Care

Dear ACHE Colleagues,

September 13th was like any day at the Lawrence General Hospital with meetings, planning, and interactions that advance our vision and patient care mission everyday but, at around 4:30pm my assistant interrupted a meeting I was wrapping up to say “There’s been an emergency and hospital leaders have been notified to gather here immediately.” There had been a number of explosions and fires that had erupted in Lawrence. As Senior Vice President of Operations and Chief nursing Officer I assumed the incident command as we executed on disaster preparations we have practiced so well.

The whole organization came together quickly and knew what to do. We did not know for several hours when the explosions would stop or how many casualties would present in the Emergency Center yet we used the time to anticipate the worst, calling all staff back to the hospital who had just left a change of shift and immediately moving the patients out of the Emergency center into the hospital who had been waiting for hospital beds. The hospital command center carried on for the next 36 hours with many not leaving the building in order to care for the medical and emotional needs of patients, families and staff, many of whom their own homes and families had been effected throughout the Merrimack Valley.

Some of the most vivid images from that night may not be what an outsider would imagine. I saw Dianne Anderson, our CEO holding the mother of the one of the victims in her arms as her daughter fought for her life in the OR as she had just learned that one of her daughter’s best friends had succumbed to injuries from the explosion. I saw the Director of Human Resources, Arlene Tarantino, working with families to get them information and calm them in the midst of their trauma; I saw our CFO, Felix Mercado, translate for patient family members awaiting news from the ED. I looked into the eyes of the father of one of the patients who pleaded “Tell me she is going live”. These are not normal responsibilities or situations we think of executives assuming but we do so because we love healthcare, have a strong commitment to our staff and physicians and responsibility to the communities we serve.

There are other more visible ways we see that hospital and healthcare leaders care; the fact that despite the challenges of healthcare reform, revenue reductions and cost caps in Massachusetts we have maintained higher RNs per 1000 patient days than most states, produced better patient outcomes in almost every meaningful quality measure and rank highest in terms of best hospitals and healthcare in the world. I and many colleagues have spent time over the past couple of weeks fighting the dangerous Massachusetts Ballot question 1 which sought to impose rigid ratios on nurse staffing at all times at all hospitals. I did not want to be out there talking about complex issues such as patient care delivery and staffing but was so concerned with its consequences I found myself along with many colleagues at community forums, talking to our staff, debating on TV and radio and talking to neighbors, families and friends. You all know the end of that story by now and the November 6th election results. There was no victory but a crisis was averted by a landslide public vote (70 to 30) NO and mandates to address such issues in our hospitals working together.

Proponents of the ballot question continually portrayed hospital leaders as only concerned about profits. As responsible leaders we balance many needs and we always know our mission, one we cannot achieve alone. It is the compassion, commitment to excellence and an exceptional patient family experience that must come from the leaders. We have more to do but it is our “Why” that energizes us to come back every day.

Andrea Paciello President of the Massachusetts ACHE chapter reminded us about remembering our “Why” at the recent fall meeting. I would like to thank Andrea, the board and all our members for your service and commitment. I encourage you to be active and involved in ACHE and encouraging other leaders to do so as well. The organization and FACHE credential stand for leaders who care. Belonging to ACHE and obtaining your Fellow credential is another way to make that evident.

Best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season. May you enjoy your families and enjoy your solitude.

Karen O. Moore RN, MS, FACHE
Regent, ACHE of Massachusetts
American College of Healthcare Executives

Senior Vice President of Operations/Chief Nursing Officer
Lawrence General Hospital
Lawrence, MA