



Compassion

Resilience

You

Connection

Accessibility

Together, For You

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Covid-19 pandemic reflection from a Palliative Care RN:

As we went through initial rapid change in our practice, it was evident how much face-to-face interaction with our patients and their family—typically together in the same room—is appreciated. It showed us how much we value that type of interaction. When posed with trying care in new ways, whether it is a modified face-to-face visit or a virtual visit by phone or video, we realized we could still provide care—just not in the same way it was previously done. At first it felt less personal. We prefer to remain at the bedside. However, being the communication experts we are, the team rapidly identified ways we could make the experience more personal for all parties involved.

We learned that our compassion and empathy can be felt through the phone or video as well as in person. One of the things we did was contact every single community Palliative Care patient every few weeks to check in to see how things were going. We checked to see if they had medication refill needs and made sure they had everything they needed at home for essential supplies. We felt it was important to keep that connection and offer support for our special patient population due to their increased risk and often homebound status. We spent a significant amount of time listening. Many patients struggled with being isolated even more than they already feel they are. Listening helped relieve some of their anxiety and depression, even if momentarily. We had an excellent opportunity to make sure they knew how much we cared and that we were still accessible. When we were able to open the community practice for face-to-face home visits again, we spent time calling back patients who had cancelled face-to-face appointments to let them know our protocol for how we would keep us all safe during their visit. Many patients were very appreciative of this. With the extra calls to patients, it gave nurses the opportunity to learn more about our patients and establish a stronger connection and level of trust.

Our team has always worked well together. With all the new ways we're working, we've made it a priority to stay connected with each other. We have an excellent department leader who made sure we felt supported along the way. I feel so blessed to work for Mayo Clinic in Palliative Care, and I feel that having gone through this experience our team has become even stronger.

Nine months later...

Resilience. An emotional labor of love.

Feeling called to a defined purpose to help people through their suffering now more than ever. Supporting each other through our own suffering.

Realizing just how much our eyes can communicate.

Being a comforting presence even when delivering the worst news a patient or family will ever hear. Helping people connect and realizing how important connections are.

Supporting our colleagues by caring for the dying in the hospital.

Working differently.

Praying we get back to some semblance of normalcy.

Rejoicing in the day when we will once again be able to hold a hand, wipe a tear, and have those we care for see how much we care by being able to see our whole face.

Having more relaxed conversations instead of operating in “crisis mode” for extended periods of time.

Being grateful for an amazing team and realizing the amount of growth we have achieved through this challenge.

Artist Lori Chilefone
Eau Claire, WI

Lori Chilefone lives in Eau Claire, Wisconsin and freelances as a graphic artist and fine artist. She earned a BFA in Graphic Design from the College of Visual Arts in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Her passions are family, collaborating artistically, foraging for wild edibles, and partaking in the diverse offerings of Wisconsin’s Chippewa and Red Cedar Valleys. Lori often employs collage as a magnetic poetry for her art with simple materials. With attention to the piece unfolding, meaning is revealed, and some of her collages are used as sketches for her paintings.

Melissa’s story reinforced how the core strengths of a palliative care worker (one who offers attentive and unique care to each person) may have also been what helped her team deal with the required restructuring COVID-19 dictated. To illustrate a visual of connectedness, compassion, support and resilience, a healing mandala came to mind. A mandala, which is Sanskrit for “circle”, is comprised of unique and repeated components and is rendered from the center and radiates outward. Creating and contemplating mandalas is a traditional practice especially among Hindu and Buddhist cultures, and can be a transformational form of meditation, healing and growth.

View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).