A message from Dr. Peter Yellowlees, Chief Wellness Officer

Let’s celebrate the ‘new normal’ and say thank you

Now that we are all opening up again, and most people are coming back to work, we should celebrate how well we have done here at UC Davis, and in Northern California. Celebrating and acknowledging our success is a great way of reducing our anxiety levels for what may still be coming in the future as we constantly adapt and change to differing situations and needs. We are so fortunate to have a large number of phenomenal staff who have contributed massively to our success.

Can I suggest that you all thank your colleagues for what they have done, and at the same time, congratulate yourselves. 2020 has already been a year that none of us will forget. Despite all the difficulties, loss and grief associated with the pandemic, it has really allowed us to show our resilience as we put our community first by taking individual and group action so successfully, both within our UC Davis work environment, and in our homes and community settings.

To ease another’s heartache is to forget one’s own.
Abraham Lincoln

I recently connected with a number of colleagues, looking for them to nominate people who represent those who have really gone beyond the norm during this crisis. Two of the first of many who have been mentioned were from the ED, Rupy Sandhu, Executive Director of Operations, and Dr. Daniel Colby, ED physician.
When I reached out to them they were both humble so when I asked them to describe their roles during COVID, they both immediately described the great team environment in the ED.

Rupy said: “During this pandemic we were all scientists collaborating on how best to care for patients and staff. The staff's ability to navigate and shift with daily and sometimes hourly changes was impressive – I am deeply grateful to work alongside committed, highly skilled nurses, doctors, technicians, pharmacists, HUSCs, patient safety officers, social services and registration team.”

Dr. Colby took a similar approach, saying: “We had to re-evaluate every process in our emergency department with COVID-19 in mind. Our ability to quickly, thoroughly and safely evaluate and treat critical patients is the core of Emergency Medicine and this pandemic made us question the way we do everything. I continue to be so impressed with the ingenuity and flexibility of our entire team including all our physicians, NPs, nurses, pharmacists, techs, HUSCs and even our patients during these trying times. Despite the obstacles, our elite level care has continued throughout.”

Both of these amazing and caring UC Davis Health stars acknowledged the challenge the pandemic brought but their focus was mainly on being grateful to work with such committed and skillful teams in the ED.

So now we can celebrate their modesty as well as their excellence, because this is how they were described by their departmental leadership, Dr. Nate Kupperman and Jennifer Wyatt: “They dedicated countless hours along with the ED Clinical Operations Team to respond to the COVID crisis. They worked tirelessly with department leadership with the goals of protecting staff, caring for patients and ensuring the Department was prepared for any scenario. The Department is grateful for their talent and hard work.”

I wonder how they might celebrate their success? This is how Rupy said she spent time away from work during the pandemic: “My favorite pastime is to read – I love reading biographies and history books – I go into a different world! During COVID I have read a lot on the previous pandemics that have occurred and also spent a lot of time teaching my grandparents and aunts and uncles on how to use FaceTime, which has been a task in itself. My family and I have spent time playing board games, taking the dog for walks and setting weekly virtual family check-ins – we have had several virtual dinners. It has been stressful, however, but being able to share concerns with my work team and my family have made riding the waves much easier.”

And here is Rupy's photo...so you can congratulate her, and thank her, in person when you next see her.
Rupy Sandhu (right) with her children

What about Dr. Colby's passions? Well, his photo, with his wife and daughter, is a giveaway...
As you can see from his own description: “Typically, my favorite pastimes are travel and supporting our UC Davis Health-sponsored Sacramento Republic Football Club, but the season is obviously on hold due to COVID-19. To be honest, I’ve experienced moments when the stress of our field and the general sense of doom have briefly overwhelmed me, but my family, friends and colleagues have quickly lifted my spirits. Regular Zoom calls with friends have been a surprisingly great social outlet. But most of all, I’ve been lucky enough to spend extra time with my fabulous wife and our amazing two-year-old daughter. Our second child is arriving in June and while it’s a strange time to have a kid, I think that’s probably always true.”

We are fortunate to have great colleagues like Rupy Sandhu and Dr. Daniel Colby. Please do thank them when you see them. Many of the things that they have said, I know, apply to large numbers of dedicated people working here at UC Davis so do think about their words, their modesty and their focus on colleagues and teamwork and use them as examples for all of us as we emerge into the “new normal.” We are all committed to patient care and academic excellence and in many ways this crisis has pulled us all together even more than previously.

And to finish on another bright note, those of you who are regular readers of “Good Stuff” will know that I am particularly interested in climate change. Here is yet another COVID silver lining in the form of a paper published on May 19 in Nature, which shows that California had a
temporary reduction in CO2 emissions of 41.8% during our COVID confinement, compared with an average U.S. reduction of 31%, and an international one of 17% (SEE HERE). While this is temporary, it is a good explanation for the improved air we are all breathing, and an encouragement to us all to keep up some of our fossil fuel-saving habits started during COVID.

My best wishes to all. Keep well.