



THE HERITAGE CIRCLE MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY



Dear Midwestern University Alumni and Friends,

During these uncertain times, please know that our thoughts are with you, your families and all who have been affected by COVID-19. Many of you are on the front lines in hospitals and clinics treating patients who are impacted by this virus and personally enduring unimaginable challenges, while others are adapting to a different set of issues having been required to provide emergency treatments only. We recognize this global pandemic is impacting each of you in extraordinarily difficult ways. As all of our alumni and friends are faced with these challenges, we wanted

to express our heartfelt appreciation to each of you and share that this particular Heritage Circle newsletter has a different tone than any before it.

We thought you might appreciate reading a couple of inspiring stories from some of our incredible alumni who are serving their communities (see Page 2). You can also view additional stories by visiting www.midwestern.edu/alumni and clicking on COVID Alumni Stories. We hope these firsthand experiences will bring a sense of true pride and joy as a member of the Midwestern University family.

STRESS, BURNOUT AND SELF-CARE IN HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

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Life and work can be stressful. This may be particularly true for us right now as we live through a time of collective stress, and for some, the experience of trauma. There are no easy answers for how to move through this pain. However, there are some important things that we can do to care for ourselves so that, in turn, we can care for

those we are dedicated to serving.

Burnout. As a first step, it is important to understand more about the stress we may face as part of our profession. While the types of professional stress are varied, a particularly salient form of professional stress in the helping professions is burnout. Burnout refers to a job-related syndrome

SUMMER 2020



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Continued on Page 3

MIDWESTERN ALUMNI ON THE FRONT LINES



Rebecca Zimmermann, D.O.

REBECCA ZIMMERMANN, D.O. (CCOM 2010) is a family medicine physician in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. The first week the country went on lockdown was chaotic at her clinic. The clinic had to cancel patient appointments so that they could attend to thousands of backlogged virtual visits across two states, and they struggled to advise about a virus that they knew very little about.

The hospitals in her area erected huge climate-controlled tents outside the ER in preparation for the COVID-19 surge. When things slowed down at her clinic, Dr. Zimmermann volunteered to take several shifts at a local hospital. The tent environment was surreal for her; it felt like a movie. Face shields, gowns, gloves, white plastic curtains. Some patients were sick, some just scared. Dr. Zimmermann tested a handful of patients, and a few were positive. What struck her was that some patients she was sure would be positive weren't, and some with very mild symptoms were.

“People say I'm a hero. I don't think so. I signed up for this. The real heroes are those working in grocery stores, utility workers and essential factory workers. They never planned that their lives would be in danger at work. But they are still showing up, and that is truly admirable,” said Dr. Zimmermann.



Matthias Linke, D.O.

MATTHIAS LINKE, D.O. (AZCOM 2003) is currently completing a Spinal Cord Injury Medicine Fellowship at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. All residents and fellows have been deployed to work on COVID-19 units. The hospital service was very intense at the peak of the patient surge with unsuccessful codes outnumbering healthy discharges. Now, the situation has improved, and Dr. Linke and his team are discharging more patients home.

“It has been incredible to see everyone come together to support each other,” Dr. Linke said. Every day at 7:00 pm the city erupts with everyone clapping for frontline workers. Dr. Linke feels blessed to have the opportunity to be part of the healthcare team taking care of New York during this pandemic.

PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING THE HERITAGE CIRCLE

The Heritage Circle recognizes donors who have included Midwestern University in their will or other estate plans such as a trust, gift annuity or beneficiary designation of their retirement plans such as IRAs, 401(k) plans or life insurance policies.

Currently we have nearly 90 Heritage Circle members. We would like to invite you to become a member of the Heritage Circle and join this philanthropic group of individuals who are helping ensure the future of Midwestern University. Through your generosity, you can make a difference for Midwestern University students, who will then make a difference in every community where they provide excellent healthcare to their patients.

For more information, please return the enclosed card or contact Staci Glass, Director of Institutional Advancement, at 623-572-3286.

characterized by emotional exhaustion (e.g., emotional overextension), depersonalization of those we work with (e.g., negative and detached responses to others) and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Notably, burnout is common in healthcare. One study, conducted with over 7,000 physicians, found in part, that symptoms of burnout were reported by nearly 50% of the sample and that burnout was higher in particular types of care (e.g., emergency medicine, family medicine, internal medicine) (Shanafelt et al., 2012). Importantly, this finding is not specific to physicians alone, with similar results demonstrated across the healthcare professions. The experience of burnout can lead to a variety of impacts. With regard to professional impact, there is an association between burnout, patient care quality and safety (Hall et al., 2017; Salyers et al., 2017). From a personal standpoint, burnout has been associated with higher rates of both depression and anxiety (e.g., Yilmaz, 2018). Given the frequency of burnout in healthcare, the impact on our community is significant.

Re-Conceptualizing Self Care. Understanding that professional stress is part of practice, it is imperative to treat the development of self-care skills as a foundational competence. However, for many who experience high levels of stress and burnout in the workplace, self-care can seem like an additional burden. The reality is that there may not be time each day to spend an hour at the gym, to get 7-8 hours of sleep and/or to connect with others. Yet, the pressure to achieve self-care can become frustrating, burdensome and add to a sense of overwhelm. However, being busy does not negate the critical need to engage in self-care. So, how do we navigate this challenge? Consider the list below as options:

- Find 15 minutes each morning to meditate, lightly stretch to wake up your mind and body and/or do a few yoga poses.
- Take time each day for lunch. Allow this time to be focused away from work. Nourishing your body and allowing some time to be used for a light physical activity (e.g., head-clearing walk) can help you to physically and mentally re-set from a stressful morning.
- Allow yourself a “relaxing transition” back into your home following a long day at work. This may involve:

Take a relaxing bath or shower. This relaxing and cleansing activity can be a cue to yourself to “clean off the day” and start your evening, rejuvenated. Use this time to practice some mindfulness, checking in with your body to find places of tension.

Journal for 10 minutes each day when you return

home to process your experiences for the day. Getting it “out and down” may help you to avoid ruminating about stress and afford you more clear headspace for the evening.

- Include a “winding down hour,” before you get into bed. One hour before you go to bed each night, prioritize an opportunity to disconnect from your work, technology and ideally your television. This time can promote a true transition to rest and help you to feel that your day does not run right into your night. This time can be spent reading for fun (not work), connecting with loved ones or doing something else that helps you to feel prioritized and cared for.

PRACTICING SELF-COMPASSION

Finally, no matter how little time you have to give to yourself, it is critical to practice self-compassion. Self-Compassion includes three interconnected concepts. These concepts include Self-Kindness, which is the extension of kindness to oneself while avoiding being overly harsh and self-critical; Common Humility, or the understanding that human suffering is common and should not isolate or separate us from others; and finally Mindfulness, or the capacity to balance awareness of our pain without over-identification with the experience (Neff, 2003). Ultimately, it is up to us to provide the same levels of dedication and compassion to the goals of caring for ourselves as we did toward the goals of obtaining our degrees and excelling in our careers. Caring for yourself will ultimately translate to even more successes as you move forward in both your career and in your life. ■

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* Deceased

CARING IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Several provisions included in the *CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act)* provide income tax incentives to donors assisting charities during the coronavirus pandemic. Among these:

- An above-the-line deduction of up to \$300 is available for cash gifts to public charities, providing tax savings for those who give but don't otherwise itemize on their income taxes. The deduction reduces adjusted gross income (AGI).
- The usual limit on deductions for cash gifts is suspended for 2020. Taxpayers are able to deduct up to 100% of AGI for cash gifts to public charities this year. In general, donors may claim deductions for cash gifts up to 60% of AGI and for gifts of appreciated property up to 30%. Excess deductions may be carried over for up to five additional years.
- For 2020, required minimum distributions from IRAs are suspended. Those age 70½ and older may still make qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) of up to \$100,000 annually to Midwestern University, even though no distributions are required this year. QCDs are made with money that has never been—and never will be—subject to income tax.

LEARN MORE

For more information or if we can assist with the charitable aspects of your plans, please contact Staci Glass, Director of Institutional Advancement, at 623-572-3286. ■



MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Educating Tomorrow's Healthcare Team

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