



*Leading Through* **COVID-19**

## GRATEFUL ENGAGEMENT IN THE MIDST OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS: **Working with Clinician Partners**

During this time of unprecedented uncertainty, you may be wondering what lies ahead when it comes to your grateful patient strategy. Is it appropriate to contact your clinician partners? Is it okay to talk about philanthropy during this time?

The answer is a resounding YES.

During times of great challenge and uncertainty in the United States, like the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the stock market crash of 2008, overall philanthropy increased. With great hope, this

COVID-19 epidemic should be no different. Yes, the world looks different today and for the foreseeable future—most are working from home, taking meetings over video and not entering hospitals. Yet, grateful patient strategies can still be advanced through the engagement of clinicians in meaningful ways.

Some clinician partners—nurses, emergency room clinicians and intensivists—are on the frontline taking care of COVID-19 patients. It's hard to imagine what these medical specialists are going through. Many are working 12- to 15-hour shifts with little or no time off, in scenarios that our hospitals have never seen before. Taking care of these clinicians should be top of mind right now. Though the referrals and typical communication between you and these clinician partners may halt for now, the gratitude their patients feel

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and express will not. In fact, it may increase threefold. Patients will still find ways to express their gratitude for the lifesaving and compassionate care that they are receiving now and in the future.

Now is the time to reach out to clinicians in the epicenter of

this crisis to directly say thank you, show your love and provide support. Share with them the incredible stories of how the community is coming together to support them as caregivers and the hospital overall.

Not all clinicians are on the frontlines, yet. In many places, medical appointments and surgeries have stalled or stopped completely, leaving some clinicians in an unfamiliar place of uncertainty and reduced workload. Reach out to these caregivers to determine their availability to dedicate their compassion and services to philanthropy. If they have time to help with initiatives, continue your typical engagement with these clinician partners while remaining conscious, agile and responsive to their ongoing situations. You may even identify some clinicians who have not had time, until now, and they could soon be your new clinical champions.

If you haven't already, ensure your organization is plugged into the story and feedback-capturing mechanisms including patient experience surveys, Daisy Awards, traditional recognition programs and more. Many organizations have instituted new ways for people to express their appreciation and gratitude to the frontline staff through emails, social media or websites. If your organization

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has these capabilities, make sure you are privy to all messages coming through, and, if your organization has not yet done this, explore how you can create these channels. Capturing these will allow you to share them with your clinician partners now and in the future.

Implementing these strategies enables future work with clinician partners, continually connecting them with their grateful patients when the crisis is over. Also, encourage story capturing and sharing from beyond the frontlines, as these clinicians are still keeping in close contact with colleagues and can help identify incredible stories for future use.

And, finally, if you were in the process of providing training and education to your clinician partners before this epidemic, you can now provide some of that education virtually. Many are used to online technology that supports these types of meetings. However, this is likely not a time for large group meetings, since those who are positioned to participate must be carefully considered.

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