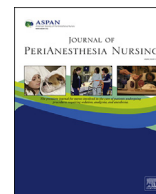




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Editorial Opinion

A Plane Crashed Today ... Do You Care?

A plane crashed today — actually five commercial jetliners crashed in the United States today — and the day before, and the day before that ... and for at least the last 5 days. Twenty-five jetliners in 5 days, 5,000 souls lost. Do you care?

If this were a true story, you would be outraged. How could this happen? Why have we not grounded all air travel in the United States? What is the federal government doing to remedy this atrocity? The reality, unfortunately, is that the atrocity is real, the numbers are true, but the cause of death is not a plane falling out of the sky; the cause of death is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Let that sink in. As I write this editorial in the last week in July, the United States is averaging 1,000 COVID-related deaths per day.¹ To be exact, as of July 27, there have been, in the United States alone:²

- 150,000 COVID deaths
- 4 million COVID cases
- 452 COVID deaths/million
- 120,000/100,000 hospitalized with COVID

Globally, the world has seen 650,000 deaths and 16 million cases.² The virus has infected 450,000 health care workers globally, with more than 600 nurses dead worldwide.³

The US response has been weak at best — unprepared, disorganized, and impotent. National leadership has denied, misled, misinformed, and for all intents and purposes, been absent. First, the crisis did not exist. It was a hoax. Then it will go away ... just disappear! It is someone else's fault ... another administration, another country, poor leadership on the national and local levels. Always placing blame on someone else. All the while, nurses and other health care providers put their lives on the line to lead the fight, often inadequately prepared and inadequately protected.

Enough is Enough!

In 2000, the landmark publication, *To Err is Human*,⁴ was released, identifying patient deaths from avoidable medical errors as one of the leading causes of death and injury in the United States. This book transformed the field of patient safety, establishing numerous recommendations and launching a worldwide movement to guide patient safety efforts, many of which are now a part of our standard practice as we aspire to the delivery of safe patient care. COVID-19, on its current trajectory, is poised to be one of the leading causes of death in 2020.⁵ This is simply unacceptable

when we have valid and reliable measures to slow the spread of this virus.

It is time for the nursing profession, arm in arm with our colleagues, to take control. The nursing profession continues to be ranked as the most trusted profession in the country, with 85% of Americans rating nurses' honest and ethical standards as either high or very high.⁶ It is time that we, as individuals and as a profession, take the lead in curbing the spread of this virus. Make your expertise known, on the local, state, and national levels.

Locally, wear your mask EVERYTIME you are out in public. Stay 6 feet away from others. Do not gather in groups, large or small, when avoidable. Teach ... gently ... but teach. I live in a very rural community where there are many who believe that COVID is indeed a hoax, and that they have the right to go maskless. I must admit that I have mastered the evil eye above my mask in the grocery store and vegetable stand. I step back from people, and I ask them to step back from me. Whenever the time is appropriate, I educate: "I am a nurse. I wear this mask to protect you, and I wear it to protect myself." As the only nurse in my small church, I serve as the COVID expert ... no we can't meet in the sanctuary; no, it will not be a good idea to hold a funeral in the sanctuary. Wear your mask ... wear your mask ... wear your mask. Wash your hands ... wash your hands ... wash your hands.

For those of you with children in K-12, make your concerns known about the risks of students returning to the classroom. Use social media to make your point. Call out health care providers (unfortunately, there are many) who post unsubstantiated claims. We should all be providing evidence-based care and recommendations. When the evidence is absent, question it, LOUDLY.

On the state and national levels, continue to push back and question, lead in negating the fallacies that are proclaimed by so many. Also praise and promote recommendations that are evidence based.

Most importantly, USE YOUR VOTE!!! At the time of this writing, we are 100 days to the November election. By the time you read this, we will be less than a month from the election. I do not care what party you normally affiliate with or what your religious beliefs are. I think that we can all agree that the current state of affairs IS NOT acceptable. The only action that can bring about real change is to vote your conscience; vote for the survival of the country and the world.

A plane crashed today. More will crash tomorrow. I foresee that many more will crash before this pandemic is under control. Do you care? If so, let your actions and your vote reflect those concerns.

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The ideas or opinions expressed in this editorial are those solely of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of ASPAN, the Journal, or the Publisher.

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Vallire Hooper, PhD, RN, CPAN, FASPN, FAAN*
College of Nursing, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN

* Address correspondence to Vallire D. Hooper, East Tennessee State University, College of Nursing, POB 70551, Johnson City, TN 37614

E-mail address: HooperV@etsu.edu.