Recognition is Especially Meaningful in the Age of Coronavirus

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The nursing world has quickly shifted attention from the WHO’s proclamation of the Year of the Nurse and Midwife to all-coronavirus-all-the-time. Yet the convergence of these two events should not be lost on us. 2020 was to be the time to celebrate the work of nurses and midwives internationally, highlight the challenging conditions they often face, and advocate for increased investments in the nursing and midwifery workforce. Who could have imagined that the critical importance of nurses in our society would be brought into focus so clearly with the real-life exemplar of the COVID-19 pandemic? Every day, the media highlight the threatening conditions nurses and other care providers are facing and how staff shortages may impact the healthcare system’s ability to save lives.

While life as we know it may have changed, the core character of nurses has not. We are in touch with numerous nurse leaders these days, and every one tells us of their pride in their nurses’ courage, dedication to patients, and the teamwork nurses so naturally bring to caring for patients and for each other. We hear that even during this time of social distancing, nurses are still providing the human connection that patients need to help them heal as they navigate illness and pandemic fear. At DAISY, we often talk about how nurses take care of “the rest of us” and how grateful we are for their extraordinary skill and compassion. More than ever, “the rest of us” need to be taking care of nurses and other healthcare providers. The best thing we can all do to support the nurses in our lives is to follow CDC guidelines to minimize the virus’s spread.

We all depend on the resilience of nurses – their ability to deal with everything being thrown at them and still return the next day or night to do it all over again. We depend on nurses’ conviction, no matter the circumstances, to treat us every day not only with their clinical excellence but also delivering that care with compassion. As nurses are on the frontline of getting us through this pandemic, we need to shore up their resilience with our gratitude. Our gratitude is a constant reminder to them that they are making a difference – a difference they may not realize they are making when they are in the throes of overloaded hospitals and too few resources.

We have heard from several nurse leaders that they are getting an unusually high number of nominations for The DAISY Award – testimony to the facts that nurses continue to provide above-and-beyond care no matter what - and that patients, as always, want and need to say thank you. We call on organizations that honor their nurses with The DAISY Award to continue to do so during these stressful times, encouraging nominations by patients and other staff and selecting Honorees. Please allow your DAISY Awards to help you maintain a modicum of normalcy. Don’t let the pandemic stop the ritual of meaningful recognition for Honorees and those who are nominated. Even if the award presentation is simply a small meeting with the Honoree’s CNO in her/his office, this expression of gratitude for making a difference to a patient will make a meaningful difference to the nurse. There is no better time to remind them why they became nurses.

We at DAISY feel that every year is the Year of the Nurse, and this year is turning out to make a powerful statement no one could have anticipated. The lessons of Florence Nightingale’s nursing practice during the Crimean War are still being applied today - basic handwashing, maintaining standards of cleanliness, learning from the data, and more. The WHO’s commemoration of her 200th birthday, and, we believe, the goals it set for 2020 will be achieved beyond their expectations. Nurses deserve nothing less, now and always.