

Adapting to Uncertainty

Category: Omicron

written by Joseph Fennelly | January 14, 2022

I retired at age 89 from a primary-care internal medicine practice of nearly six decades. Medicine as service has permeated my bones, my mind, my spirit. How can I still contribute, without a medical license, without a prescription pad? Especially in the age of omicron, with uncertainty abounding everywhere?

Perhaps examining the reality of uncertainty, and how my fellow clinicians and I learned to adapt to it, will be of some value.

I believe we must expand our vision by acknowledging the long-term uncertainties surrounding COVID-19. We can no longer trust that the light at the end of the tunnel is a train that will allow us to continue our particular odyssey unfettered. We must embrace with our gaze the complexities, the ecology of life, that continuously affect our timetables and that demand constant change.

Living with uncertainty requires that we maintain hope through action. By adjusting to the chronicity of these respiratory viruses, we will be better able to move forward, with less fear and anxiety, in our everyday activities.

Returning to the "good ole days," when it appeared that modern scientific medicine could resolve all health problems, is more wish than reality. It is only in the "now" where we can shape the future.

It is essential that we learn from our errors. Our leaders, in both government and science, must maintain an element of humility while refusing to guarantee safety when continuous unknowns persist. Likewise, the public must be more willing to accept their responsibility for doing what has been proven to help: vaccination, N95 masks, distancing and isolation to protect others, etc.

However, in order to move forward amid these discordant sounds, we must create harmony. We must create hope that is built on the work we do, that reinforces reality, that embraces truth, and that reminds each of us that we could not survive without each other.

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