

# World Health Day

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## FROM OUR PATIENTS AND MEMBERS' PERSPECTIVES

### **Gabriela Tanasan, leader of ENUSP Organisational Development & EPF Board Member**

*“Mariana has been a nurse for more than 20 years now in a psychiatric hospital because she wanted to help people in need of medical assistance, but also those who needed some support, counselling, a kind word and sometimes even a hug. Her commitment goes above and beyond the general duty of a nurse, always implementing a warm and empathic human approach when dealing with patients. Mariana has a magical and contagious smile when she enters the ward and gently asks patients ‘How are you today?’ On this occasion of World Health Day 2020, I want to express my RESPECT and GRATITUDE to all nurses in the world, especially Mariana, for their endeavours in brightening the lives of patients.*

### **Ian Hodgson, Former nurse and Secretary of the EATG Board of Directors**

*Nurses have been at the forefront of the HIV response since the very early days of the epidemic. They are ideally placed to provide the very best holistic services that are truly accessible to everyone, especially vulnerable key populations. As HIV continues to pose significant threat in parts of eastern Europe, nurses working here have a great thirst for knowledge and insights into how best to deliver quality care for people affected by HIV. For World Health Day 2020, let's remember nurses based in these countries. We need to promote a much higher level of knowledge sharing, interaction, and networking across Europe so as to support and empower those working in often difficult and challenging conditions, and improve the health outcomes of people living with HIV.*

### **Rasmus Isaksson, President of DHR and IF Board member**

*My experiences with nurses are mainly from my early years in life when I visited hospitals more frequently. During most of the experiences, the nurses have done a really good job. I especially cherish the memories when I was a child, in pain and having recently undergone surgery. The nurses sat by my bed during the whole night checking my temperature and blood pressure every two hours or so. Of course, I found it a little bit irritating at the time being woken up several times a night, but it also made me feel more secure. Nowadays I remember it as proof that I was very well taken care of and that I have a lot to thank for receiving such good and meticulous health care. On this World Health Day, I celebrate nurses for the incredible and unsung work they do every day.*

### **Pete Wheatstone, Data Saves Lives Community Member**

*Like many healthy, busy people, I'd never really taken too much interest in health matters, hospitals, doctors or nurses or the myriad of supporting services and folk that make up the National Health Service in the UK. I guess I'd rather taken it and them for granted.*

*Of course, that all changed when I became seriously ill back in 2014 with what turned out to be colorectal cancer. And boy was I lucky to receive care from some wonderful folk! I don't remember all of them – cancer and surgery hit you pretty hard -but there really were some stand-out moments.*

*There was the Clinical Nurse Specialist who was my main point of contact and the constant throughout my cancer journey. I have no idea about the sheer volume of work she did behind the scenes but I do know that she was the constant, reassuring presence from the time of my diagnosis through to the end of my 5 year surveillance. I'm not sure how I would have got through that journey without her.*

*And then there was the absolute angel of a nurse who got me through from surgery through to post-surgery discharge. Nothing was ever too much trouble. Despite being the busiest and most senior nurse on the ward, she had all the time in the world for me and all the other patients.*

*I have many fuzzy memories of the many others who helped in my diagnosis, surgery & chemotherapy & recovery both at the hospital and back at my local GP surgery. I realise these days that what I thought was my luck was in fact just the sheer professionalism and dedication from all of those doctors, nurses, other healthcare professionals and ancillary staff. To all of them I say a most sincere 'thank you'!*

### **Viorica Cursaru, Myeloma Romania**

*All over the world the Medical Staff have proved their commitment to fight against this pandemic. It is up to the Governments to support them as to enable the Medical Staff to perform their work and, most equally important, to protect them from getting themselves infected. The toll of the doctors who died IN THE LINE OF DUTY it is already too high and therefore we must do whatever it takes to keep them alive. Medical Staff from all over the world are our HEROES. We must show them our support, respect and gratitude.*

### **Koen Vinderhoets, Father of a 5y old boy with Cystic Fibrosis**

*My son has cystic fibrosis while I'm quite familiar with hospitals. Two people stand out in the care for my son: his doctor and physical therapist. His doctor bought my son a set of cars. He can pick one when she has to do something that causes discomfort. She's so attentive and forthcoming. She did a minor treatment on him the day Belgium went in lockdown. She sacrificed her break for him, while she can't see her own kid for weeks. Simply amazing.*

*His physical therapist never ceases to be there when we need her. Last year, we went on holiday and she joined us for a few days with her daughter, leaving her son with her husband. That's just awesome as my son needs daily physical therapy. These two ladies with their care and attention for my son, keep him stable and capable of going to school.*

### **Robert Greene, Data Saves Lives Advisory Board**

*Doctors, nurses, and healthcare professionals has demonstrated in these difficult times that they care. What they do is more than a job. It is their way of showing all of us, that their main concern is the patients' wellbeing, even above their own.*

### **Tamás Bereczky, Communications at EUPATI and EATG member**

*Living with chronic illnesses creates a peculiar position for the patients as we are in regular and often very long-term contact with healthcare professionals. We also become somewhat insensitive to their struggles and daily work - we simply take it for granted that tests are carried out, medicines are dispensed, and appreciate the kind questions and easy conversations about our health. Times like these open our eyes to the heroic nature of the work done in healthcare. We suddenly realise that so far almost unnoticeable people actually risk their lives and health for us and others. Simple words cannot*

*express the gratitude. We will, therefore, fight shoulder to shoulder with healthcare workers for making sure that their work is more appreciated and rewarded.*

### **Dr Serena Mingolla**

*My father is a doctor and I have always had a deep respect and love for those who did his job. But I never felt so much gratitude for all those who are on the front lines to treat people like in these days, during which we are facing the coronavirus outbreak. In my country, Italy, but also in the rest of the world, doctors, nurses and healthcare workers are showing us how they believe in their mission risking their own lives to save others. When all this ends, we must start over from the values they are teaching us in these difficult days: courage, generosity and humanity. We have to remember and keep telling their heartbreaking and inspiring stories for a long time. These heroes deserve our recognition and our deepest gratitude.*

### **Anastasia Semaan, Youth Group Member and STYPA III Graduate**

*During this time of stress and confusion, it is important for us to remember all of the people who are helping to make the situation better all around us. Healthcare professionals, nurses, medical staff and volunteers are doing their best to support patients and meet all of their needs currently. It is important for us to remember that as much as this is a time of change for us, it is just as new of a time for those around us whose job it is to support us. Everyday all of these professionals and volunteers are jeopardizing their lives to save ours, and behind each one of them there is a family waiting for them.*

### **Sally Hatton, Youth Group Member and STYPA III Graduate**

*The NHS is almost always a hot topic of conversation in the UK, and most particularly over recent years when we have seen so much political change and the challenges of dealing with Brexit (whichever side of the debate you're on). It's a point of national and community pride that we have access to such a unique and versatile service and our own Prime Minister's recent call to action put the NHS at its centre - we need to protect this most valuable resource in order to be able to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and our way of life.*

*All of these factors have combined to remind people that the NHS is not something we can take for granted, it's a living, changing system that needs care and attention to function and to thrive, and something we can all take responsibility for.*

*However for me, living with a rare condition, the life changing value of the NHS is something I'm acutely aware of. Within this system I received an accurate and speedy diagnosis, I've had access to a world-leading specialist in my condition for as long as I can remember. I've had surgeries which I couldn't even dream of paying for they were provided within a different system, and I didn't have to worry for a second when complications from my condition meant much more time in surgery, weeks recovering in Hospital, accessing long term physiotherapy, and even receiving further medication and a blood transfusion. I know that if anything is wrong, I'm a phone call away from getting the help that I needed immediately, safely, at no cost, and provided by some of the most skilled and compassionate specialists you could wish for.*

*No healthcare system is perfect, and the NHS isn't an exception - I've still had my own challenges at times and I work supporting families with rare conditions who share their frustrations and disappointments with us as well - but at a time like this when we're facing a national crisis, panic,*

*fear, and uncertainty, there's a reason that the NHS is the forefront of our minds. We'd be lost without it, physically, emotionally, mentally. Our current experience is bringing this starkly to our attention and reminding us how lucky we are that despite its sometimes very real imperfections, the NHS is ours, it's wonderful, and we're lucky to have it.*

### **Birgit Bauer, Patient Advocate and Social Media & Digital Health Expert**

*My physiotherapist is one of the most helpful people in my „MS Team“ beside my doctors. I work with him for years now and it helps. He makes sure, that I am free to move and have less pain. Without him, I would have more MS related issues in my daily living as with him. And so I appreciate him very much in my live as one of my heroes helping me to live a good life with my MS*

### **Gianluca Quaglio**

*Gianluca Quaglio MD, PhD, works in the European Parliament Research Service (EPRS) as policy analyst in health and research policies sectors.*

*In these difficult days, there are people who can't stay at home. They are our doctors, health workers and nurses. Their homes are hospital wards and intensive care units, where they risk illness and mortality themselves. They spend days and nights in hospitals and clinics, where the flow of patients awaiting treatment is relentless. They witness day after day test results that confirm new cases of infection. Yet in spite of everything, they bring words of comfort, they instil courage. They face fatigue and frustration, but do not give up. In this difficult time, these women and men represent the best of us all. To them, we reserve our immense gratitude.*

*The generosity that health workers are showing must not be transformed into a simple emotional response of gratitude. This epidemic should be an opportunity to rethink our public health systems after the crisis. Effective health systems equipped - both at hospital level and primary care - with an adequate number of personnel, are one of the most important contributors to population well-being. After the crisis, our health systems should be re-defined not as costs but as investments.*

*Innovating in healthcare today means strengthening the social system and this happens even without resorting to sophisticated technological discoveries. The real impact on the health of the population and, consequently, on the economy of a country, occurs through simple measures: promoting prevention, ensuring basic services, informing and communicating with citizens, and having an adequate number of health workers, both at hospital and community level. These actions are more and more often set aside in favour of apparently more "fruitful" choices.*

*In this difficult time for Europe, I would like to think for a moment likewise to all health personnel who work in developing countries, especially in Africa, where to operate in difficult conditions is the norm, where the risk of infections is permanent. This epidemic reminds us of how small and borderless the world can be. Giving adequate support to health systems in developing countries and their health workers, also means protecting ourselves...*

### **Lars Münter, Danish Committee for Health Education**

*Health care professionals might not create jobs, economy or growth per se - but a world without them wouldn't either. They are awesome basic building blocks of a resilient, safe, and prosperous society. Dedicated, driven - sometimes stubbornly so - and essentially extremely caring. And when*

*the current challenges are gone, they will diligently return to making people and communities healthier. Chapeau!*

**Sibel Tuscu, Turkey**

*The strongest fighters of the countries are the armies of health workers. We celebrate your World Health Day.*

**Marta Górna, Poland**

*Thanks to my midwife I was not only not afraid of giving birth, but waiting for it like for Christmas! :-)  
I was feeling calm, full of joy, happy and safe. Thanks to her, the moments of greeting my babies to this world were the most beautiful in my life. Thank you!*