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Tarnished Silver Linings

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While worrying about the current situation in health care, I decided to attempt to discern any silver lining, no matter how tarnished. I thought I might share a few of my thoughts.

Consumers are increasingly aware that when the going gets tough, nurses are nimble and able to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. They have seen that during the current pandemic, as nurses have arranged ways for women not to be alone in the hospital by using technology to enhance their experiences, despite the use of masks and other limitations necessitated by the pandemic. I believe women will continue to trust nurses for health education and guidance. For example, public discourse on the topic of vaccinations remains replete with misinformation, making the need for clear, evidence-based information more critical than ever.

To that end, together with our sister journal, JOGNN, and journals in other disciplines, we recently published *Immunization for Pregnant Women: A Call to Action* by the Maternal Immunization Task Force (American Academy of Family Physicians et al., 2020). Task Force members, including the Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, are committed to improving immunization rates in pregnant women, and the *Call to Action* provides guidance and recommendations for how clinicians can help improve immunization rates. When a vaccine for the novel coronavirus becomes available, one of the unanswered questions may be whether or not it can be used in pregnancy. Because different vaccines will use different components, I believe women today should be reassured that safety is paramount and that nurses will advocate for...
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transparency and accuracy when they provide information.

Data are becoming more and more a fact of life. Women and people of color are suffering disproportionately from the pandemic (Price-Haygood et al., 2020). However, they are less likely to be “hidden” because of the data now available (Gold et al., 2020). Maternity nurses have long been aware of the concerning rates of maternal mortality in the United States, especially among Black women, yet many people in the general public remain unaware of the gravity of the situation. Nurses need to keep educating the world about health disparities, including the implications of various social determinants of health as well as economic inequalities. Fortunately, there are more and more emerging data to help them in this endeavor.

Furthermore, there are some tantalizing nuggets of information that may provide insight into future care. Philip et al. (2020) have suggested that, in Ireland, sheltering in place has resulted in a decrease in preterm births. This finding should be taken with a grain of salt because the report is currently in preprint format, before peer review, and there is no apparent biological plausibility for this assertion. However, similar findings are being reported in a preprint from a Danish study (Hedermann et al., 2020). How interesting to think about the potential implications these findings may have for such an important health issue.

Although anxiety exists about the burnout of nurses and threats to their mental health, research is being conducted regarding how to build resilience among nurses, especially in stressful times. Kunzler et al. (2020) found that the current studies are relatively poor and that there is a need for more study in this area. Interventions studied include mindfulness education, cognitive behavior training, and others. More research during this critical time can provide help for nurses not only now but also in the future.

I don’t see the world through rose-colored glasses, but these small positives provide something to help as COVID-19 continues to be the lead story. For friends who lament that this is the worst pandemic the globe has ever seen, I call their attention to the fictional work by Emma Donoghue (2020), The Pull of the Stars, which follows a maternity nurse for 3 days during the 1918 flu pandemic. After reading it, I can say that we do have a few more advantages in 2020 than in the early 20th century.

Let’s keep building on those tarnished silver linings, and perhaps we can add more.

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