

As the world steps back, healthcare professionals from around the globe are going above and beyond to serve those in need during this COVID-19 crisis. Dr. Kristofer Smith, naviHealth's President of Home-Based Medical Care, is one of these dedicated workers, tirelessly answering the call to volunteer for the cause despite not practicing acute care medicine in over a decade. These are his daily stories – uncut and untouched, as told from the front lines.

Day 9 - We must do better

In his book ["Just Mercy."](#) Bryan Stevenson writes, "I've come to believe that the true measure of our commitment to justice, the character of our society, our commitment to the rule of law, fairness and equality cannot be measured by how we treat the rich, the powerful, the privileged and the respected among us. The true measure of our character is how we treat the poor, the disfavored, the accused, the incarcerated, and the condemned."

This powerful statement from a remarkable leader follows me as I work.

Over the course of the weeks, we notice some surprises in our patients. We are diagnosing many patients with new ailments, unrelated to COVID 19. Numerous patients find out they have diabetes, heart failure, anemia, or kidney disease. Most of the patients are surprised with our findings.

Probing deeper, we realize that many of our patients haven't seen a doctor in years. They lack insurance, can't get time off from work, have Medicaid but no one will see them, have cognitive impairment, are illiterate...the list goes on. Our ward fills with patients whose chronological age is 55, but they look 10 years older. Even worse, we know that many of those that have already succumbed to the virus fell because of the pitiless assault on weakened bodies.

We struggle to get patients home as many live in shelters that will no longer take them, have lost their insurance after they were laid off or have too many people living together in a small apartment. We do what we can. We give patients 30 days of their chronic medications, provide them phone numbers to free clinics we know to be overwhelmed and get them temporary housing supported by the city.

But it all seems inadequate.

Even as I drive home, on mostly empty streets, I notice that many of those who are outside are clearly homeless. They have little hope of evading this virus. We know this calamity will further highlight that, as a nation, we are failing whole communities. I hope we can come together so that next time we are better ready to help those who need it most.



Dr. Kristofer Smith, President of Home-Based Medical Care, naviHealth

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