

COOK COUNTY  
HEALTH



# Employee Recognition

September 24, 2021



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## Dr. Michael Hoffman, Lead Physician, COVID-19 Medical & Surgical Units

**I am tired. We are tired.**

March 18, 2020, is a day I will never forget. We opened our first COVID-19 unit at Stroger Hospital and I began admitting patients with suspected COVID pneumonia.

Within weeks, we were operating five COVID medical units and several COVID ICU's for the most vulnerable patients in Chicago and Cook County.

**Our team of providers, nurses and medical staff worked tirelessly for months, not knowing when it would end, and certainly not knowing it was just the beginning. We sacrificed much, along with many other frontline workers in and outside the health care field. Tragically, some of us died just doing our jobs. But back then we were called heroes.**

As the first surge subsided and a vaccine became closer to reality, we were able to come up for air. It wasn't until then that many of us, including myself, talked openly about what we had experienced. I cried many times in private but didn't fully admit what I was feeling. To this day, I'm still not sure I've had the time to process what we've been going through.

**Early on, a patient asked me if I was scared. Dressed in full personal protective equipment with only my eyes visible through my face shield, I replied that I wasn't. But I've learned in the time of mask-wearing, sometimes the eyes can say it all. He told me that he was proud of me.**

He succumbed to COVID pneumonia, with a rapid deterioration in his oxygen level overnight. It's hard to describe what those words meant to me. I will never forget him or the feeling of helplessness I had, losing a patient who was so kind in his final hours, to such a ruthless virus.

**As the second and the third surges came and went, it was like being pulled under ocean waves repeatedly with seemingly shorter periods to come up for air.**

Watching as some chose to go about their lives without regard to the health and safety of themselves and others was disheartening, to say the least. But then came some hope. Exactly nine months after opening our first COVID ward, I received my first dose of the COVID vaccine. It seemed we were finally turning the corner.

**And then came the conspiracy theories and misinformation that sowed the seeds of mistrust between much of the public and the medical community. Protests outside of hospitals and threats to health care workers have become a sad reality.**

**Suddenly we aren't heroes anymore.**

The great majority of patients now admitted to our hospital with COVID infection are unvaccinated. I don't question their reasons — it is not the time. I haven't lost compassion for them — it is needed more than ever.

**But for those who are unvaccinated and haven't had to meet me with only my eyes visible behind a face shield, now weary, I urge you to *trust* us.**

**I implore you to think of one person in your life that you care the most about and get vaccinated for them, if not for yourself.**

You don't owe me anything, but I am pleading with you to get the vaccine.

Because once again, I am tired. *We are tired.*



# First TAVR Procedure at Stroger Hospital

## Thank you to:

- Dr. Abhimanyu Saini, Interventional Cardiologist
- Dr. Ray Sawaqed, Cardiac Surgeon
- Kristie Allen, Charge Nurse
- Shiny Daniel, Nurse Practitioner
- Siby Parekat, Lead Technologist
- Dr. Feodor Gloss, Anesthesiologist



# American Heart Association Gold and Gold-Plus Awards for Severe Heart Attack and Heart Failure Care



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## Thank you to:

- Shiny Daniel, Nurse Practitioner
- Regeena Francis, Nurse Practitioner
- Meriam Kanikunnel, Physician Assistant
- Arlet Nedeltcheva, Data and Research Manager

# Expansion of PrEP and HIV Testing at Logan Square and North Riverside Health Centers

## Thank you to:

- Alice Cameron, Executive Director of HIV Services
- Dr. Denise Cunill, Associate Medical Director of Ambulatory Pediatrics and Logan Square Lead Physician
- Dr. Daniel Vittum, North Riverside Lead Physician
- Jesus Estrada, Regional HIV and PrEP Coordinator
- Marisol Nunez, Ambulatory Clinic Manager at North Riverside
- Gabriela Velazquez, Physician Assistant

