

HEALTH CARE IS A PEOPLE INDUSTRY

WORKERS KEEP THINGS TOGETHER, WRITES NADIA ALAM



NADIA ALAM
Column

admitted to a floor bed, crowding hallways, stretchers and chairs. I see patients confused and frustrated by the bureaucratic jumble our health-care system has become. So many of them even without a family doctor. I see managers struggling to juggle beds, make impossible decisions between who's the sickest. I see doctors, nurses, caregivers and patients stretching in extraordinary ways to fill the gaps in our health-care system. I see burnout etched on faces and echoing in so many voices.

It's what pushes me to advocate for better.

And yet, we are lucky. We at least have a health-care system. It's far from perfect. And parts of it are just plain broken. But we have a starting place. A launching point.

So I took another look around today. I saw the

same doctors, having worked several nights on call in a row, there again with a quiet wisdom and compassion. I saw the same nurses, still working double shifts, but doing so with a kind word and smile. I saw the many small acts of kindness that smoothed over the rough edges of an overcrowded emergency department or a swamped medical-surgical ward. I saw the patients who, waiting for their own surgery, graciously made way for the emergency case that bumped them.

Change is coming to our health-care system. It is slow and unwieldy. But it is coming. And it is desperately needed.

The problems we see today were years in the making. The solutions will take just as long.

While we push for change, I'm also going to take a lesson from my patient, and I will thank the people who keep our health-care system together.

Nadia Alam is a Georgetown physician and past president of the Ontario Medical Association. Her columns also appear on <https://medium.com/@docschmadia>. She can be reached at nadia.alam@oma.org.

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