

## Letters From Leaders



During the height of the coronavirus crisis, the employees of the Mount Sinai Health System put their lives on the line. In the face of the deadliest pandemic of our lifetime, they came to work, donned protective gear, and willingly cared for and healed highly contagious COVID-19 patients. Mount Sinai employees saved more than 6,000 lives, administering medicines and antibody-rich blood plasma, delivering respiratory therapy, sanitizing rooms, and sitting by patients' bedsides when it was too dangerous for family members to visit.

Such deeply compassionate care is the foundation of the Mount Sinai Health System. Compassion is at the heart of what we do for our patients, our surrounding communities, and our fellow colleagues. This enduring value has underlined every action we have taken during the COVID-19 crisis, from nursing the severely ill to caring for our colleagues as they manage the tremendous responsibility and stress of trying to heal a deluge of patients in the midst of a pandemic.

At the core of this level of compassion is respect: respect for all individuals, regardless of color, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, or gender. This is an essential value to embrace in both your personal and professional life.

Respecting one another means we must stand up and speak out against racism wherever and whenever we see it. Respect also means we learn from one another which, for Mount Sinai, is essential to elevating the quality of our care and advancing biomedical knowledge. Mount Sinai actively recruits talented physicians, scientists, and students of color to help correct the underrepresentation of minorities in medicine. Not only is this the right thing to do, it is also the smart thing to do. Working with a diverse team pushes us to think outside the limits of our own comfort zone. By boosting the diversity of our staff and student body we have accelerated creativity and innovation at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

Respect for one another is particularly meaningful to us because The Mount Sinai Hospital and the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai sit at the intersection of some of New York's highest- and lowest-income neighborhoods. That means we care for everyone; we do not differentiate. Mount Sinai has always been committed to caring for all, the most fortunate and the most vulnerable, providing them with the same compassionate care. Every person who enters our doors is entitled to a safe, healthy, equitable, and inclusive environment for healing, working, and learning.

As Mount Sinai dedicates its resources to understanding and effectively combating COVID-19, we are focused on the pandemic's disproportionate impact on disadvantaged and non-white communities. Mount Sinai recently established the Institute for Health Equity Research to rigorously study disparities and translate learnings into scalable initiatives that can improve health in underserved communities. This will complement our ongoing effort to highlight and help address social determinants of health – including access to nutritious food, safe housing, accessible transportation, clean air, and recreational facilities – that contribute to health inequities in our society.

This is the ethos upon which the Mount Sinai Health System was founded 168 years ago: to deliver equity in care. At that time, the Jewish community of New York was excluded from receiving proper health care at other local hospitals. Our institution quickly evolved into a hospital dedicated to serving all, regardless of background, regardless of ability to pay.

With this mindset, highly specialized Mount Sinai physicians who normally do not work with infectious diseases stepped forward during the crisis to help care for COVID-19 patients. It's why so many of our researchers dropped their precious work to join the search for answers to the pandemic. And it's why our students volunteered to help in any way they could, from helping transform sleep apnea machines into ventilators to distributing masks in East Harlem.

It all starts with compassion: caring enough for your fellow human being to want to make a difference, allowing yourself to see the best in each individual, and recognizing opportunities to learn from those who have different perspectives.

The twin values of compassion and respect will serve you well through your life. They will be the true north on your moral compass that will help you find your path to success.

Americans who share these values will guide us through the challenges of the global pandemic, as well as our nation's legacy of racial injustice, towards a brighter, healthier, and more equitable society.

I wish all of you the best of luck,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Davis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kenneth L. Davis, M.D.  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Mount Sinai Health System