

A DONKEY FOR A DOCTOR

During this virus-sequester time, not a day passes without several news reports of how all of this is impacting our medical professionals. We heard yesterday, for example, that the VA Hospital (where my lady worked in her final nursing years) is begging retired doctors and nurses to return for temporary assignments. Nita seemed more pleased than usual that she let her nurse license expire years ago. Now she's exempt.

Our grandson/doctor is doing his medical residency in a busy city hospital, which has almost become his residence. He's cut off from his family to protect them, and we're guessing that the virus confusion is what caused him to pull a 28-hour shift last week. Recognizing their long hours of work and their forced isolation from their homes, a fellow who owns several large motels in our town has graciously offered free lodging to all medical professionals.

I saw on computer news that one of the doctors who treated coronavirus patients during the first outbreak in China died from the disease. Then, just a few days later, an American doctor also was listed among the virus fatalities. Medical treatment has always placed doctors and nurses at risk, whether they were treating measles or mumps or malaria or meningitis. Whatever infects their patients may also strike them. So, while what we're seeing now is scary, it is nothing new. Like firefighters and police and other first responders, our medical caretakers know when they choose that career that they are exposing themselves to danger. They do it for us.

Ben Parks laughed when he told me about a receipt they found in his grandfather's papers. During a flu epidemic in the late 1880s, his Albany, Texas, grandfather paid the local sawbones for medical care both during that crisis and from then on. His receipt said: "One burro for any medical care needed."

A lot of our doctors and hospitals right now don't know how (or if) they will be paid, but they're treating us anyway. With their offices closed to all but emergencies and with so many hospitals overflowing with critically ill patients, their world—like ours—is turned on its head, and nobody has a clear enough crystal ball to predict when or how all of this will end.

I do know that most of the doctors and nurses who take care of me are people with strong faith, so I know that they can find strength to face the unknowns and the dangers of this epidemic by trusting in the greatest Healer of all.