

# We Hear You

## The Power of Teamwork

Since the outset of the pandemic, researchers from Saskatchewan universities and colleges have been learning from people just like you – healthcare employees struggling to navigate work in a pandemic. In sharing heartfelt stories of your struggles and your work to redefine success, you emphasized four things that deeply affected your experience of work in a pandemic – teamwork, communication, leadership, and burnout. This newsletter series summarizes some of the valuable things we learned through your stories.

During the pandemic, our teams moved quickly to introduce changes in practice to keep patients safe. The prolonged implementation of unusual measures made your work more difficult, and the resulting changes affected your sense of team. It became challenging not to see your colleagues' faces because of masking requirements, and not to be able to build relationships in simple ways, like eating lunch together. And when team members were asked to work from home, you wondered if we were really all in it together.

But in the face of these struggles, many of you also told us that the arduous experience of working through a pandemic strengthened your team, and made you realize that together, you could accomplish things you ever thought possible. When your teams were working well, or when adversity drew you together, the resulting culture of hope and support helped carry you through the worst of times.

### Teams can be powerful

You told us that strong and effective teams have a direct impact on feeling overwhelmed. Many respondents described teamwork as the process of setting aside individual priorities to focus on common goals and supporting each other.



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### Teams can be powerful, cont'd

During COVID-19 outbreaks, you were more attentive to each other's needs. You jumped in to lend a hand in difficult situations, and you used less difficult moments to care for each other by shifting the focus from work to recognize the full humanity of the person working beside you, asking "how is your mother?" or "how is your garden?" or "how are the kids doing?" Through these supportive actions, you offered your colleagues brief respite in the face of emotional overwhelm. Your care for your colleagues enhanced your ability to care for your patients and showed us how strong our teams can be.

*"It brought you together more. Like you were all fighting something you couldn't see but all working together to try to fight it."*

You told us that you were mindful more than ever that everyone you work with is on the team, and all were needed to improve patient safety and quality of life.

### We hear you

You reminded us that we are all on the same team –patients, families, and staff –and that having each other's support makes all the difference.

### We are all on the same team - family included.

You told us that patients were lonely, and that some became depressed, did not heal as quickly, or did not live as long as they might have if their families were present with them. Many of you accepted the need to overhaul your work to support video conference visits, or to test or vaccinate for COVID-19, or perform other much-needed new roles in the hope of ending the separation of patients and families or reducing its impact. You took one for our team. Others took extra time to fit in email, telephone, and video conference updates with family members to help them stay connected with your patients, and make sure they had a voice in family decisions, or as substitute-decision makers.

*"I send out a weekly email, just letting families know what's happening this week in terms of COVID. I have received a lot of positive feedback from families and other people saying, "Thank you for that, it's very helpful."*

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