New Year's Resolutions – A Different Perspective

After a typical year, January usually finds us reflecting on bad habits. We resolve to lose weight, exercise more, be more productive or more efficient, spend more time with family, and so forth. But 2020 was not a typical year. With a pandemic raging, we also saw horrifying examples of social injustice, a nation divided along political lines, weather extremes, and deadly firestorms. The year ended with a Presidential election that was contentious and uncomfortable, even long after voting had ceased.

Consequently, as I look forward to 2021, I'm struck by what all of this has taught us or led us to adopt that we should resolve to retain. So, I invite you all to join me in making the following commitments:

1. The pandemic has prompted us to ask about the well-being of those we reach out to personally or professionally. Let's hold on to that. And mean it. We must continue to be kind.
2. Social injustice and inequity have prompted us to examine our own biases and to be more respectful. Please don't stop. We have a long way to go and it takes time. Remember that even failing to address a colleague formally at a public event can be perceived as demeaning.
3. Telehealth has become critical in caring for our patients. For much of what we do, it is efficient, and patients like it. Let's keep this in the rhythm of our practices. With the help of digital health aides, maybe we can make it even better!
4. Virtual meetings have allowed us to continue to connect. We all agree that we prefer being in the physical presence of each other, but we also recognize that virtual meetings save money and time and maybe even the planet, since they don't require airplane travel. Let's take a serious look at the reasons we meet and the outcomes we hope to achieve. Then let's decide which events should continue to be virtual.
5. Traveling less means staying home more. Between less travel and the opportunity to work remotely, some of us are home a lot. I, personally, have treasured that, and realize that I enjoy spending a holiday home alone with my husband working on puzzles or playing games. I hope you also have had more time with your families and will continue to make that a priority.
6. Many oncology providers have not had to serve on the pandemic front line as have our colleagues in the emergency department, ICU, and COVID-19 floors. Those colleagues are true heroes, and we must remember to acknowledge and be grateful for their sacrifices in the years ahead.

I could add more, but this is a start. We still have a fight on our hands with COVID-19, but now that vaccines are here, it shouldn't be too much longer. And so, I feel that I can sincerely wish for you a happy and healthy New Year!

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