HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!

Nine weeks.

I am tired, but this week felt better. We made adjustments after listening to you. As always, your feedback shapes and informs our policies. And with your support, we continue to follow practices that we consider to be safest for our patients and clinicians.

How was this week for you?

You have done such an incredible job working to create a safe place for our patients from Group Homes. I apologize that we did not do a good job of recognizing the strain that our initial policy for Group Home patients put on you. Thank you for openly sharing your concerns two weeks ago. And to John Hosford, thank you for digging through the data to make it clear how much undue pressure we were putting on the clinics.

I wish we had responded more quickly. I am so grateful to you for openly sharing with us the challenges of the previous approach to patients for Group Homes. I also greatly appreciate you for having such grace when we finally changed our recommended approach to make it less burdensome to you. We truly are fighting COVID together. I promise you that each step of the way, we will make recommendations that we consider to be best for our patient’s safety and your safety. Please keep providing us feedback so that when we do make mistakes, we can correct them as quickly as possible.

This week the CDC changed its criteria for return to work and return to the general population on the floor. At first we couldn’t find any data to support the change. Then we found a graph from unpublished data that seems to have evaluated outcomes for forty patients. We want to make sure you are safe, we want to make sure our patients receive safe care. And, if at all possible, we don’t want to ask our staff to return to work, and our patients to return to the floor, unless we know that there is not a risk that they will infect others in the clinic with COVID.

I expected to be criticized for not changing our policy to mirror the CDC policy. Instead you provided support. Thank you so much for all that you are doing to support us as we try the best that we can to lead and set a standard for care that is the safest for our patients and safest for you.

You are heroes. You are the heart of DCI. I continue to be inspired by you for all that you are ...
doing for our patients, all that you are doing for our clinicians, and all that you are doing for the DCI family.

On Sunday Jeff Bell sent me an update about our team in Albany, Georgia –

We are still standing strong down here. We are now dialyzing about 45 positive patients in our COVID unit. I estimate that 15-20% of these were picked up on our mass testing and there has been a steady trickle of patients who have completed their 14 days and have returned to their usual units with negative tests.

DCI’s hospital services team here has met the challenge head on. Even our acute nurse manager has tested positive but she is still helping out from home. All have stepped up. We have installed a DI system in the new ICU which can be plumbed to 8 different ICU beds. Hal Whetstone and DCI got us 10 chips to convert T machines to run SLED which has almost doubled our machine capacity. Thank you for that; it was a huge help.

New cases in the community are slowing down. Hopefully things have peaked.

Water and machines and good people who don’t flinch. I think we are all set. Adrian has done a wonderful job of pulling the team together and reacting in real time to all of the challenges and the changing conditions.

Last week, Karen Scott from Jefferson City, Missouri and Donna Whittle from Osage Beach, Missouri traveled to help our family in Albany, Georgia. Karen and Donna – thank you for the sacrifice that you made to help our family in need. And to the Jefferson City and Osage Beach team – thank you for taking on additional responsibilities to allow Karen and Donna to travel to Albany. We are proud of DCI Jefferson City and DCI Osage Beach!

Adrian Outridge, our Area Operations Director, asked Karen Scott two questions about her time in Albany –

1. What was most difficult about coming to Albany?  
   “Nothing, honestly it’s been terrific.”

2. What’s your best moment since being here in Albany?  
   “The huddle today, when I got the basket. I’ve been a nurse for 30 years, I know good when I see it, there’s no bad apples here.”

You are incredible Karen! We are honored to have you as a part of the DCI family.

You probably remember that Donna Whittle told the Albany team that she had come to work and it doesn’t matter what schedule she works or how many days. She arrived on Tuesday, has been working for hospital services and reports that she is enjoying working with the staff in Albany.
Both Donna and Karen said they would be glad to come back and help.

Donna, you also are incredible! We are honored to have you as a part of the DCI family.

More members of our family are traveling to help out and more clinics are taking on additional responsibilities to allow them to help out. Constance Thomas and Jennifer Bell from Shreveport and the St James clinic travelled to Boston yesterday to help out at the Walden Pond, Massachusetts clinic. This will allow John D’Antonio and another nurse at the Walden Pond clinic to help out with Hospital Services at The Lahey Clinic.

Thank you to the team in all of the Shreveport clinics for keeping everything running effectively while your leader and AOD Constance Thomas is in Massachusetts helping out a clinic in need. And to DCI St. James, thank you for also being willing to have your Nurse Manager travel to Boston to help. Connie – your team has been through so much over the last few years. I know the team at the Mother Ship well and know that they will continue to provide excellent care while you are away. My bet is that the rest of the team in Shreveport is as driven and patient-focused as the team at the Mother Ship. To DCI Shreveport – we are proud to have you in our family and greatly appreciate all your help!

Princess Patton, our Nurse Manager at DCI Med Center, Tennessee will be traveling to Albany, Georgia to help out. Princess – I will be honest. When I saw your name on the summary of people travelling to help others at DCI in need, I smiled because I was not surprised at all. You are incredible. You always put your staff and patients first. Thank you for now expanding your efforts to help the team in Albany, Georgia. And to the DCI Med Center team – we are proud of you and greatly appreciate you for all your help!

Over the last few months I have found that I am not exercising as much as I did before. Is the same thing happening for you? The DCI Big Sky Team is helping us by dancing to Laura Clery’s Quarantine Workout. You need to see this -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khUtXXgGCZo&feature=youtu.be

DCI Big Sky – you are incredible! Thank you for your incredible perspective and attitude and thank you for getting us to laugh in the middle of COVID.

To the DCI family -- thank you for believing in DCI. Thank you for supporting others in need within DCI, and thank you for your support as we reach out to help others in need. I promise you that we will continue to work each day to earn your trust. Please let us know when we slip and always let us know how we can do better.

As of today, 373 patients and 91 clinicians in our outpatient clinics have tested positive for COVID. For DCI clinicians, this number has increased by 6 in the last week. This is lower than the average of 12 new COVID+ clinicians per week for the previous two weeks and lower than the 18 new
clinicians testing positive three weeks ago and 26 new clinicians testing positive four weeks ago. It is looking like the number of newly diagnosed COVID+ clinicians is decreasing. I hope that next week we will see that the number of clinicians returning to work will be greater than the new COVID+ cases. That would be wonderful.

Of the 373 patients who have tested positive, 356 are chronic dialysis patients (the remaining 17 have acute kidney injury (AKI)). The overall death rate for these patients is 21.6%. To date, all of the DCI clinicians who have tested positive for COVID have survived and most were able to stay home and avoid being hospitalized.

In our Hospital Services programs, we have cared for 550 patients who are COVID positive. This is the second week in a row in which we treated less than 100 new COVID+ patients. We only have ten clinicians in DCI Hospital Services who have tested positive for COVID.

Of the 550 hospital patients with COVID, 358 have AKI. 220 patients have died; 181 of these had AKI. To date, all of the clinicians for Hospital Services who have tested positive for COVID have survived and most were able to stay home and avoid being treated in the hospital.

YOU are heroes. YOU are the heart of DCI, and we sincerely thank you for all that you are doing to make sure that our patients receive safe care and that our clinicians work in a safe environment.

Two weeks ago I told you that in my opinion, the most difficult three weeks were behind us. I told you that I expect that the next two weeks will be difficult, but also expect that in those communities and hospital systems that have absorbed the heaviest burden, the pressure will ease after two weeks. We are now two weeks later. What are we seeing?

Here is the update from Jay-r Lacson, from Friday –
Please disregard May 2 to May 8 because we know that some reporting is delayed. Can we rely on the data from April 26 to May 1? I’m not sure. This could also be due to a delay in reporting.

As I pointed out last week, this data is very rough, but it is the most timely data we have. Typically we would wait a few weeks before we could better refine the analysis. But with COVID, the rules have changed. You need to know now, you deserve to know now. Thanks to Jay-r Lacson, Gideon Aweh, Vlad Ladik and Harold Manley for their help in analyzing our data so thoroughly and promptly!

You probably have noticed that some areas across the country are opening back up. And you may wonder if you will see changes in DCI policies and practices soon. In our opinion, it is too early to change our approach to care and our approach to working from home. Even in those locations in which the number of COVID cases has declined, we still see a risk that it will return. We are carefully evaluating the data that we are receiving about the prevalence of COVID in each of our communities, will only make changes in our approach when we feel that it is safe to make these changes, and will keep you up to date as we evaluate our approach to care and our approach to working from home.

Thank you for your help as we have refined our approach to care for patients from Group Homes. We are still seeing that a large number of COVID+ cases are patients from Group Homes. According to Jay-r, 31.2% of our COVID+ patients are from Group Homes. We are also seeing COVID infection is very dangerous for our patients from Group Homes. As I look at Jay-r’s analysis, I estimate a 27% death rate for our patients from a Group Home with a COVID infection.
We know that people can be asymptomatic, be infected with COVID, and still transmit COVID to others. Perhaps the most important step we can take when caring for a patient from a Group Home is to make the assumption that each of us is COVID+ and make sure that we do everything possible to decrease the risk of transmission of COVID to our patients from a Group Home.

It is also important for each of us to pause for a moment and think about all the patients in our clinics. There is a greater than one in five chance that any patient in your clinic will die if they get COVID. Carefully think about the work you do each day in the clinic and make sure that you are not allowing other patients or clinicians to be at risk. If you see something that another clinician or patient can do differently to be safe, kindly suggest a different approach. This is a time when each of us needs to have each other’s back. Let’s help one another be better, and in doing so we will defeat COVID together.

As of today, we are in good shape with gowns and masks. For gowns, we currently have approximately 150,000 gowns across DCI. We have used approximately 19,000 gowns per week. If we continue this use over the next two weeks, we will still have more than 110,000 gowns after two weeks without additional inventory.

Our goal is to be certain that our patients receive safe care and that our staff has the protection that they need to provide this care. I don’t want to discover, at the end of this pandemic, that we had extra supplies of gowns that could have been used to provide protection for our patients and staff. Hal Whetstone, Keith Gilbert, Donovan Schultz, and our Area Operations Directors have been relentless in searching for gowns and other supplies. We are committed to continuing to keep our clinics stocked with gowns. We will continue to watch this situation closely and update you regularly.

From a mask standpoint, we currently have an adequate supply of surgical facemasks and N95 masks. We will not run out of either mask if we continue to follow the processes that we have implemented to limit consumption of these masks. We currently have approximately 25,000 N95 masks at the DCI Supply Company. Each direct patient care staff has been given a N95 mask to use if it allows you to feel safer. I am encouraged that all of you now have a N95 mask. Please be careful so that we can extend the life of each mask. We have also implemented a process to decontaminate the N95 masks which should extend their use. In addition, we received more than 500,000 surgical facemasks last week to be distributed to DCI clinics next week.

We still provide care in seven states in which neither patients nor clinicians have tested COVID positive. As I’ve stated before, this doesn’t necessarily mean that we don’t have any COVID infected patients or clinicians in these states. It remains critically important that we continue to recognize and identify patients and staff who are PUIs and isolate them accordingly.

Rest assured that we will keep fighting for you and for our patients. We have not and will not allow COVID to change who WE are as a company. These last several weeks have been difficult. This week will not be easy. I know you are tired, but we will get through this together.
As we partner with you and continue to support you, we are committed to keeping you up to date about where we are as a company, what we are seeing across DCI and to allow you to share your challenges and concerns with us. Next week, we will have calls at the following times –

Dr. J and Doug – Monday at 3 pm CT and 6 pm CT  
Dr. J and Doug – Wednesday at 6 pm CT  
Pam and Carol – Thursday at 2 pm CT  
Dr. J and Doug – Friday at 3 pm CT

Forty-nine years ago (two years before Medicare covered dialysis) my dad opened one dialysis clinic in Nashville, Tennessee to save the lives of eight patients. Today we care for more than 15,000 patients in more than 250 clinics in 28 states and provide services in 147 hospitals. We are honored to have you as our partner and to have the privilege of caring for so many patients in need across the United States. We remain as strong as ever.

These next months will be difficult, and we will continue to face challenges. We will continue to be successful if we face these challenges together, putting the patient first and providing support for one another.

Thank you for all that you do every single day to care for our patients and each other. Thank you for all that you are doing to support our communities. I am grateful for and inspired by each of you as we work to overcome the COVID-19 challenge together.

Doug