



# What We Learned From a Year of COVID-19

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For our frontline clinicians, the worst moments during the COVID-19 pandemic were facilitating FaceTime conversations between seriously ill patients and their families. No one should have to say goodbye to their loved ones through a screen. **The COVID-19 pandemic has been a national tragedy, and it is imperative that we take the lessons of the past year to heart to ensure that our healthcare system and our society are fully prepared to handle another large-scale healthcare crisis.**

When the virus first came to the United States over a year ago, we had little idea of how it would spread or behave. TeamHealth, in close partnership with client sites across the country, including here in Austin, Texas, acted in real-time to quickly develop a system of best practices to treat COVID patients and minimize the spread of the virus in healthcare settings.

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Our clients also rapidly cross-credentialed TeamHealth clinicians so that our doctors could move between hospitals and clinics depending on which facilities needed additional help.

As a national medical group that employs almost 16,000 clinicians nationwide, TeamHealth was able to provide desperately needed resources and information. TeamHealth's Emerging Disease Task Force gathered data from across the country and published best practices that helped us develop COVID pathways, protocols and treatment wings, limiting the spread within the hospital.

PPE was scarce in the first few weeks, but we quickly ramped up distribution of goggles, KN95 masks, surgical masks, face shields, gloves and other critical protective equipment. Over the past year, TeamHealth has shipped more than 446,000 items of PPE to hospitals and clinics across the country.

Communities across Texas experienced surges in COVID cases that threatened to overwhelm local hospitals. Last November, El Paso was hit with more than 19,000 confirmed COVID cases in less than two weeks, threatening to fill every hospital and ICU



bed in the local health system. TeamHealth clinicians from Austin and across Texas answered the call and heroically went to El Paso to provide much needed relief. Our clinicians drew on their past crisis experience treating the victims of Hurricane Harvey and similar events and provided more than 1,000 additional hours of care coverage in both November and December in the El Paso area.



The frontline clinicians I worked with on a daily basis are the true heroes of the pandemic. Many of them risked their health and safety to treat patients when they were most vulnerable. Almost 20 of my colleagues tested positive for COVID-19. We regularly held town halls and discussions with our clinicians to listen to their concerns and convey vital information. Doctors, nurses and front-line healthcare workers across the country deserve our eternal thanks for all they sacrificed.

Although we are beginning to near the end of the pandemic, it is critical that we remember the hard-learned lessons from the rapid spread of COVID-19. We don't know when our healthcare system will face another deadly and contagious virus, but it will likely happen again.

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**Thanks to forward thinking leadership and clear communication, TeamHealth will be ready.**  
Vit Ragula, MD

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