



THE FRONT LINES

By Michael Cruse

During this COVID 19 pandemic the front-lines are all the occupations and jobs that cannot Telecommute and are deemed essential-allowing our community to shelter in place. If they did not perform their duties on a regular basis the consequences would be dire; causing even further economic and possibly societal collapse. Despite their fears, these front-line workers perform their duties with the knowledge that others like them are getting infected and many are dying. The fear is further compounded because all the mortality variables are not yet known.

There is a specific kind of front-line occupation that needs to be acknowledged. The kind of occupation that allows for one's gifts, aptitudes, and passions to flourish; often including a purpose that is larger than self-it is called a vocation. This kind of vocation frequently transcends money and remains invaluable even when money is diminished or non-existent.

Medicine and healthcare, both in its application and research forms, are the vocations that are the more forward of the front-lines.

While many of us can Telecommute or perform Telehealth from the relative safety of our homes, medicine and healthcare cannot afford such a luxury.

Somebody has to actually take care to the patients--where the virus lives.

Despite being equipped with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) there are shortages, such as the N95 masks, resulting in PPE being used well beyond its researched recommendations- apparently something is better than nothing.

Because of our relative safe distance, most of us have the luxury to fear a multitude of possible future threats that have yet to emerge. It is important to acknowledge that our imagined future threats mostly do not occur. When they do occur, they are often quite different than what we imagined. It is also important to acknowledge that our perception of threat, for survival reasons, is skewed toward false positive conclusions.

An antidote to our in-born cognitive biases is the scientific method, of which modern medicine springs from. Medicine is a discipline that is guided and informed by facts and evidence.

Medical and healthcare workers live daily with an actual and immediate threat.

Although Santa Barbara has been fortunate, so far, many other parts of our Country and World, have not been so fortunate. Physicians, nurses, and healthcare workers are dying as a result of being insufficiently protected. Medicine has suddenly become a dangerous vocation and it is now a life threat to be in the service of others. It would be naive to believe that healthcare workers have been monolithic in the willingness to perform their duties; however, as an industry, they have shown up for us all.

This is what commitment and courage looks like and is worthy of our respect and gratitude for those on.

THE FRONT LINES