

CRAIN'S NEW YORK BUSINESS 2020 **NOTABLE** IN HEALTH CARE

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Crain's Notable in Health Care 2020

New York's health care sector is no stranger to disaster. Many of its doctors, nurses and scientists, among other players, have served on the front lines of crises dating back to the AIDS/HIV outbreak of the 1980s.

Very few, however, were fully prepared for the tragedy that unfolded earlier this year as the novel coronavirus spread through the region. The Covid-19 outbreak that officially claimed its first life in March at a Brooklyn hospital became the city's worst mass casualty since the influenza outbreak of 1918. And yet, as might be expected, the region's health care sector mounted a gritty response. Doctors and nurses worked to save lives in underfunded public hospitals. Many contracted Covid-19 and, after recovering at home, returned to the front lines.

Scientists at academic medical centers and drug companies joined the global race to develop therapies, and some now lead the way. Nonprofits found ways to offer free Covid-19 testing, food and other critical resources to the city's hardest-hit communities. The examples of courage, compassion, grit and ingenuity are seemingly endless.

This year's [Notable in Health Care special report](#), presented by Montefiore Health System, shines a light on many of those stories. It features the people who helped bend the region's steep infection curve downward and are still working to alleviate the economic and humanitarian toll.

This report recognizes the innovation in health care that predates the crisis and arose from it, including the advances in telemedicine and scientific research. It honors those working to fight health care disparities and other societal problems that the pandemic accentuated and that are seen anew through the lens of recent demonstrations against racial injustice.



Marki Flannery

President and Chief Executive Officer, Visiting Nurse Service of New York



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Marki Flannery, a 38-year veteran of the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, has been CEO of the huge nonprofit home-care agency since 2018. In her various roles, she's helped the organization become one of the country's largest nonprofit home- and community-based health care providers. During the Covid-

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19 outbreak, Flannery transitioned thousands of employees to remote work in short order. She helped procure more than \$5 million in protective gear and other supplies, among other initiatives. By providing uninterrupted care, VNSNY helped ease the burden on hospitals. Under a transition plan, Flannery will turn the organization's reins over to its chief financial officer, Dan Savitt, early next year.



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Visiting Nurse Service of New York Hospice Bereavement and Emotional Support Team

VNSNY Hospice Bereavement and Support Team

Team members: Willis Partington, John Anderson, Ben Cirlin, Janet King, Mary Kay King, Jean Metzker, Kei Okada, Gladys Ortiz-Alvarado, Debra Oryzsyn, Dianna Sandiford, Elizabeth Santana, Monica Santiago, Pamela Yew Schwartz and Rosanne Sonatore

Since the onset of the coronavirus crisis, the Visiting Nurse Service of New York Hospice Bereavement and Emotional Support Team has worked tirelessly to provide

counseling and emotional support for patients, caregivers and VNSNY staff.

For health care workers, the pandemic has taken as heavy a toll on the mind as it has on the body. Clinicians face untold stresses as they combat Covid-19 on the front lines. The ad hoc VNSNY team began as a small group, but it evolved to bring together staff from across the organization. Under the guidance of Willis Partington, the team offers continuing group support forums for processing stress, fear, anxiety and grief related to the daily task of caring for sick, dying and grieving Covid-19 victims. The team Skypes in virtual groups that permit participants to openly share their experiences. Co-workers are able to express feelings in a confidential, safe and nonjudgmental space during a time of social distancing as they learn powerful techniques for self-care. The VNSNY team also was instrumental in putting together a Zoom memorial service to honor the lives of colleagues and staff family members who died during the pandemic.

By remaining committed to aiding patients at their most vulnerable, and by supporting staff and preventing professional burnout, the team's efforts ensure that VNSNY's fight against Covid-19 is strongly supported.