



# North Coast Physician



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# “Kindness”

## Jennifer Heidmann, M.D.



Whenever I feel that we live in particularly trying times, I try to consider our ancestors. If I sat drinking coffee with a Plague Doctor, a Medic during any of the wars, a woman who was one of the first doctors in her medical school or community, or the docs trying to treat influenza in 1918, they might all argue their times were worse. After all, we have antibiotics galore (at least for now, and only if we start prescribing more judiciously), the ability to understand things on the subcellular level, and, for the most part, better equality for doctors coming from backgrounds other than white male.

I teach students who tell me they have met very few preceptors, especially in primary care, who seem to enjoy their jobs. Social media is full of the bleak statistics on physician burnout and high suicide risk. We are asked to work on our resilience. We try to strike a “work-life balance”. We want to love our work and also be human beings.

Even outside of the work realm, we face potential extinction of our species from climate change. We see our colleagues regularly tending to children who have been shot with assault rifles at school and

might wonder when it will be us working that day, or our own children at the wrong school that day. We see racism and sexism normalized by our leaders, and the potential for all the health risks associated with these “isms” by those who are oppressed.

It is tempting to hide, get angry, give up.

The recent New York Times article about the opioid crisis in Humboldt County was a kick in the gut too. I was disappointed in the lack of journalistic excellence. If they had spoken with the leaders in healthcare in our community who are actively engaged in projects to decrease the risk of opioids in Humboldt, they would have found a different story. Is there a concern? Yes, of course. But the work being done here has made progress in making Humboldt County safer and a national leader in developing a safer approach to opioid addiction and pain management.

How can we move forward as colleagues, physicians, community members and people with our own hopes and passions when everything seems so impossibly grim?

I propose kindness. We can notice the good works others are doing for their community and patients, and ask if we can

help. We can acknowledge each other in the hospital hallways and check in to make sure our friends and colleagues are doing OK. We can be polite when we reach out for help with a case. We can continue to advocate for ourselves and each other around safety in staffing, reasonable on call expectations, and just distribution of resources.

I am currently working three jobs to help pay for college expenses and such. What keeps me ticking is not any particular knack for resilience, nor my daily runs (day 257 in a row today, to be exact). What makes me able to keep moving forward during these trying times is interactions with others that are kind, and the potential for making a small positive difference in someone’s life. I propose that kindness is powerful.

This is not meant to be a sermon or a TED talk. I think the very health of our community and nation and planet depends on people stepping out of their comfort zone and being kind to others, to the earth and to ourselves. §

## Help the Bensky’s

*GoFundMe Page*

<https://www.gofundme.com/help-the-bensky-family>



Our beloved Dr. Norman Bensky has served this community for over 35 years. Seeing people through major illnesses, family needs, and a variety of other reasons. Often being much more than our family doctor and more like an advocate and an ally.

He had a stroke on April 1st, and then experienced another stroke mid April. This has made it so he is unable to work for an indeterminate amount of time. With the support of his wife and daughters, he is working hard to rehabilitate himself.

Between medical bills and various expenses incurred, it is creating a financial burden, when their focus needs to solely be on Norman’s recovery.

The family very much appreciates all of the well wishes they have received from the community thus far.

We thank you for your generosity and please keep sending love and light.

**\*Check back in on the site periodically, the family will do their best to give updates on Dr. Bensky's progress.**

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**PLEASE LET US KNOW.**

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Are you 65 years of age or above and work under 20 hours per week?  
 If so, you may be eligible to apply for a CMA/HDNCMS “Class D” membership category. This category allows members to pay half of the regular HDNCMS, CMA and AMA membership dues. To apply for Class “D”, call the HDNCMS Office today (442-2367) or send email: [hdncms@sbcglobal.net](mailto:hdncms@sbcglobal.net)

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