

FOUR PILLARS

ONE MISSION

ON SEPTEMBER 1, 1821, Massachusetts General Hospital opened its doors to its first patient. At the time, the hospital was one building, a stately building made with local granite and designed by Boston architect Charles Bulfinch. Since then, MGH has gone from being one of the only general hospitals in the nation to being one of many, but it has remained nationally and internationally significant. The hospital's mission is in four parts: community health, patient care, research and teaching. This exhibit presents moments relating to each of these elements at different points in the past 200 years.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

BOSTON NURSES LEAVING FOR HALIFAX

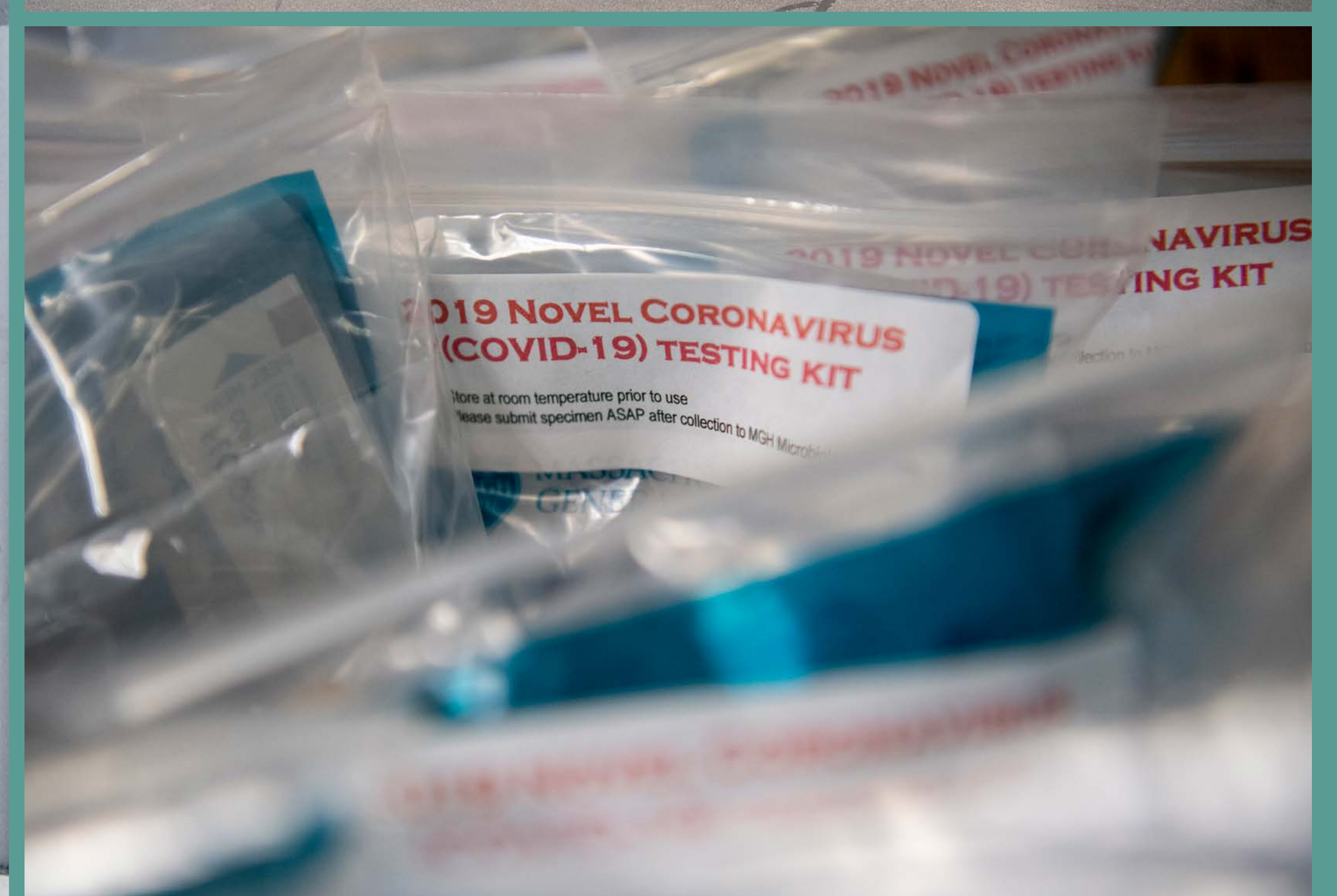
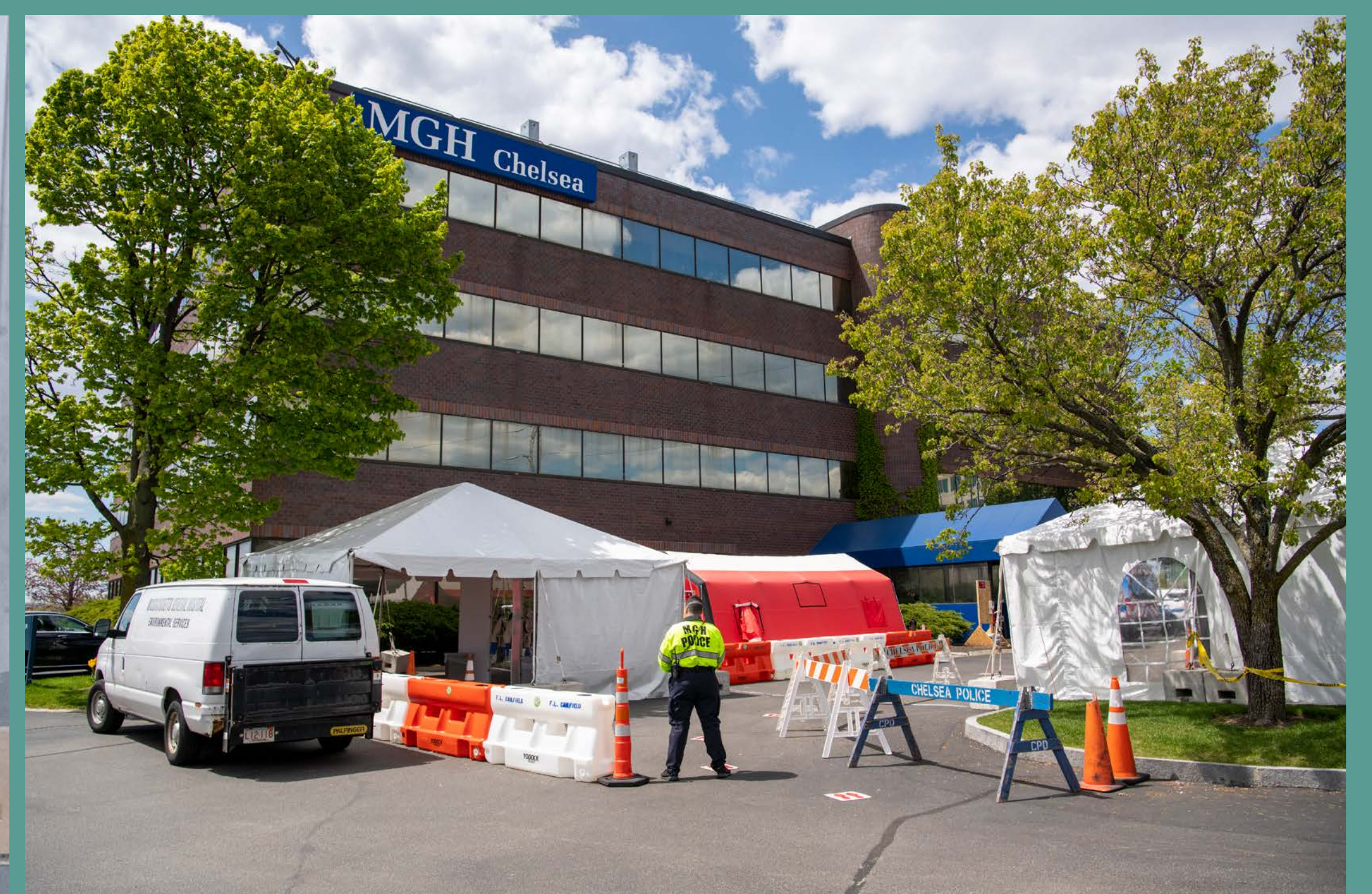
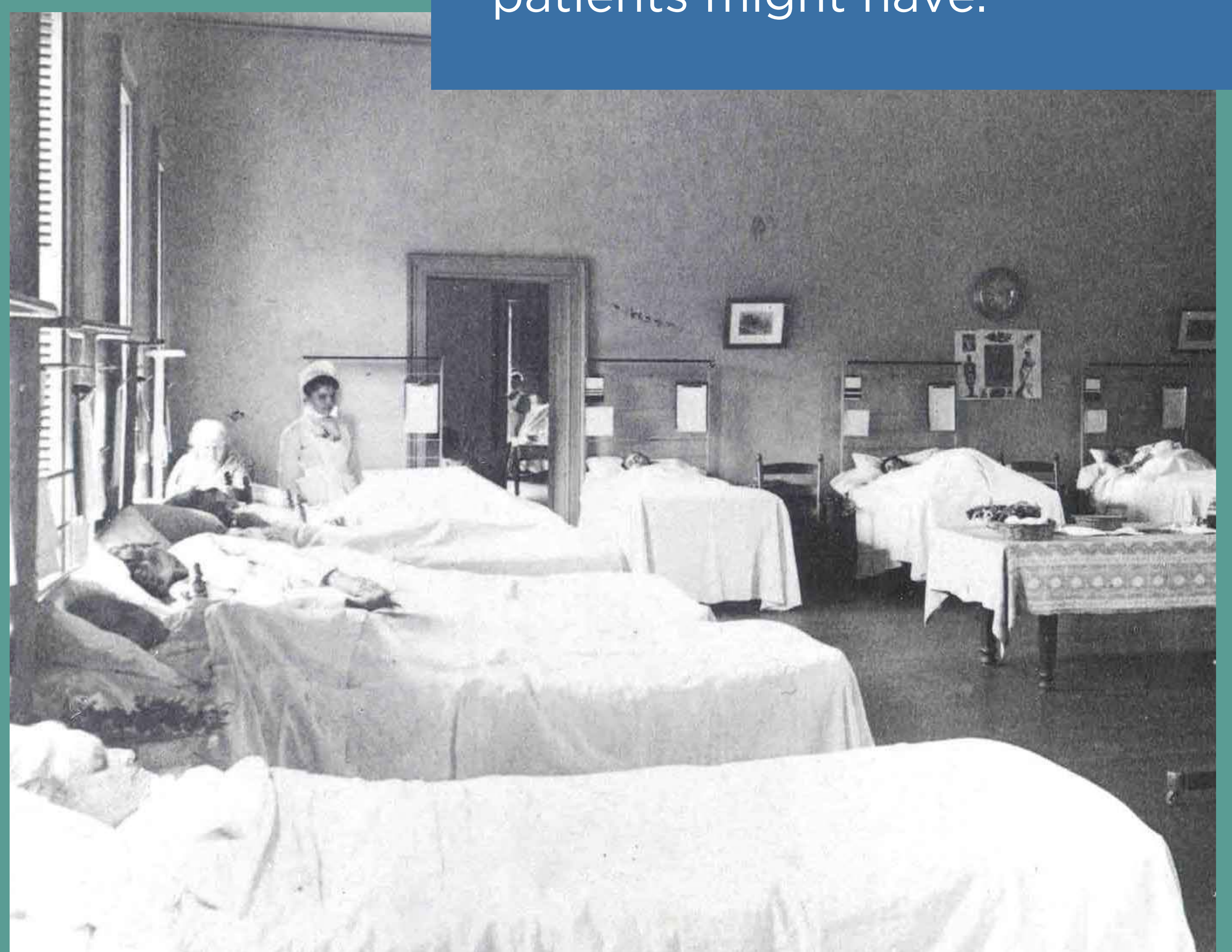


On December 6, 1917, **two ships collided in Halifax Harbour** in Nova Scotia—one carrying war munitions. The collision caused an explosion that devastated the city, flattening some buildings, blowing out the windows in others, killing about 2,000 and injuring about 9,000 more. A group of Boston doctors and nurses got on a train that night to help, and once the mayor of Halifax was able to telegram to explain what the city most needed, the Red Cross organized a group of 25 doctors and 70 nurses, many from MGH, to join in the relief effort. MGH did not have an official disaster medicine or global health unit yet, but those who were able rushed to assist, making the 27-hour train journey during a blizzard and bringing donated supplies.

Boston Herald and Journal, December 8, 1917.
Jewish Heritage Center at the New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, Massachusetts.

Until the early 20th century, many people who could afford a private doctor preferred house calls over any hospital. Poor and working-class Bostonians were MGH's primary patients. Beginning in 1825 and declining in the mid-20th century, MGH's **free bed program** allowed patients who could not afford hospital fees to receive care, as some of these 1888 patients might have.

Chelsea and **Revere** have been hit particularly hard by coronavirus, largely because of socioeconomic factors. Mass General's health care centers have worked alongside local leadership to respond. Clockwise from left: A group of Chelsea providers posing as a team, walk-up COVID testing in the MGH Chelsea parking lot, testing kits.



PATIENT CARE



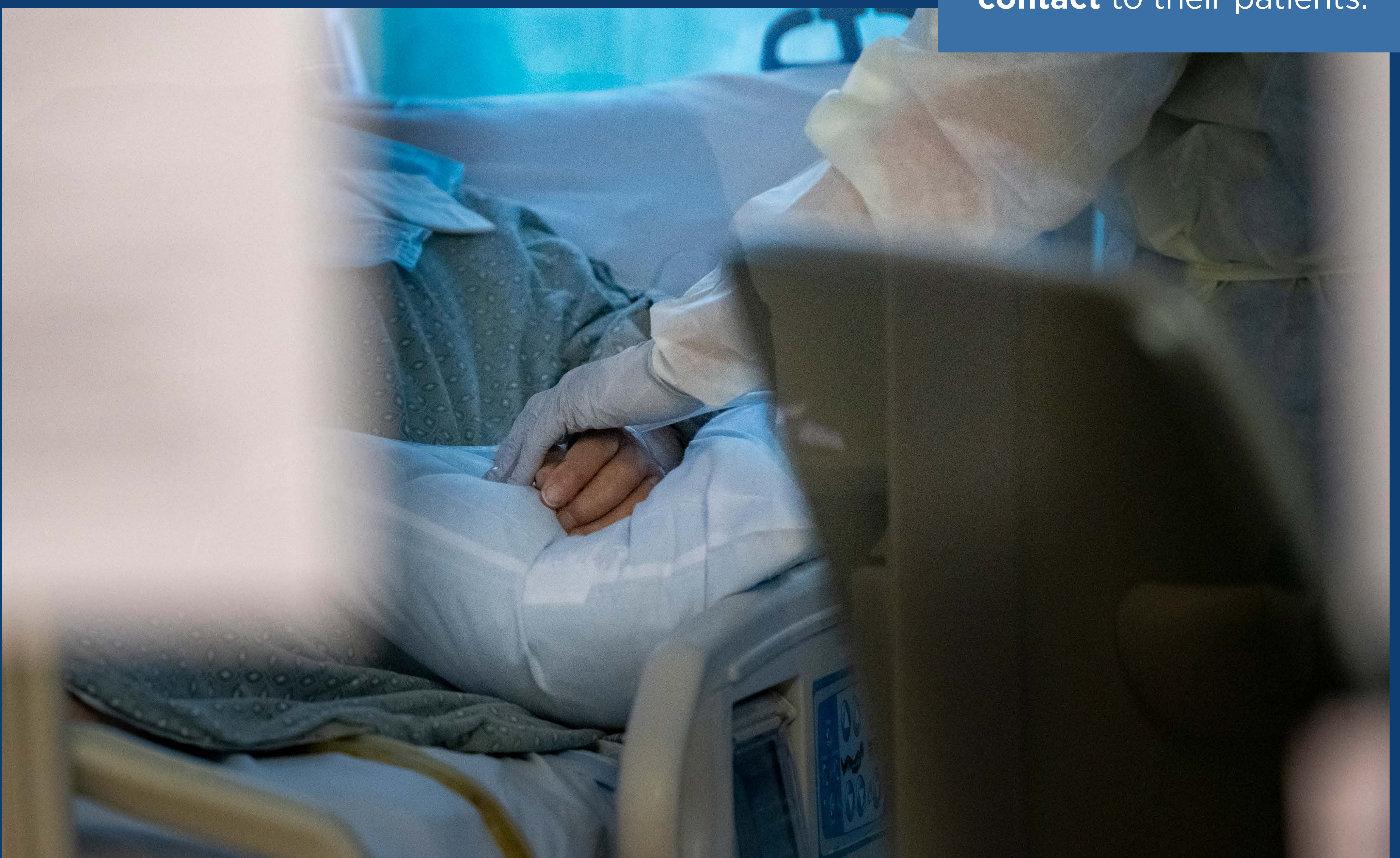
This 1888 photo shows **a women's medical ward at MGH**. The patients might have had pneumonia, typhoid fever or tuberculosis, among many other possibilities. Before 20th century advances such as antibiotics, the hospital could still offer patients a place where they could rest and be well fed and cared for.



This image, originally labeled “**posture clinic**,” is from a series of photographs taken as part of a publicity campaign for the hospital in 1926. Amid a growing patient base, expanding research efforts, and technologies that required dedicated facilities such as improved X-ray machines, the hospital launched its first publicity campaign in the 1920s while preparing to expand the facilities. The photographs from that campaign are a window into the hospital's operations in that period.

The posture clinic may have been a part of orthopedics or one of the hospital's social service or outpatient programs. The 1920s also saw expansion of the hospital's programs to support patients at every stage of life and in every socioeconomic circumstance, including programs that helped identify health issues in children who might not otherwise see a doctor or nurse.

For much of the pandemic, hospitalized patients were only able to see their loved ones through a window or a computer screen. Visitors could not be on site during the biggest surges, except in special cases. Clinicians have given much-needed **emotional support and human contact** to their patients.





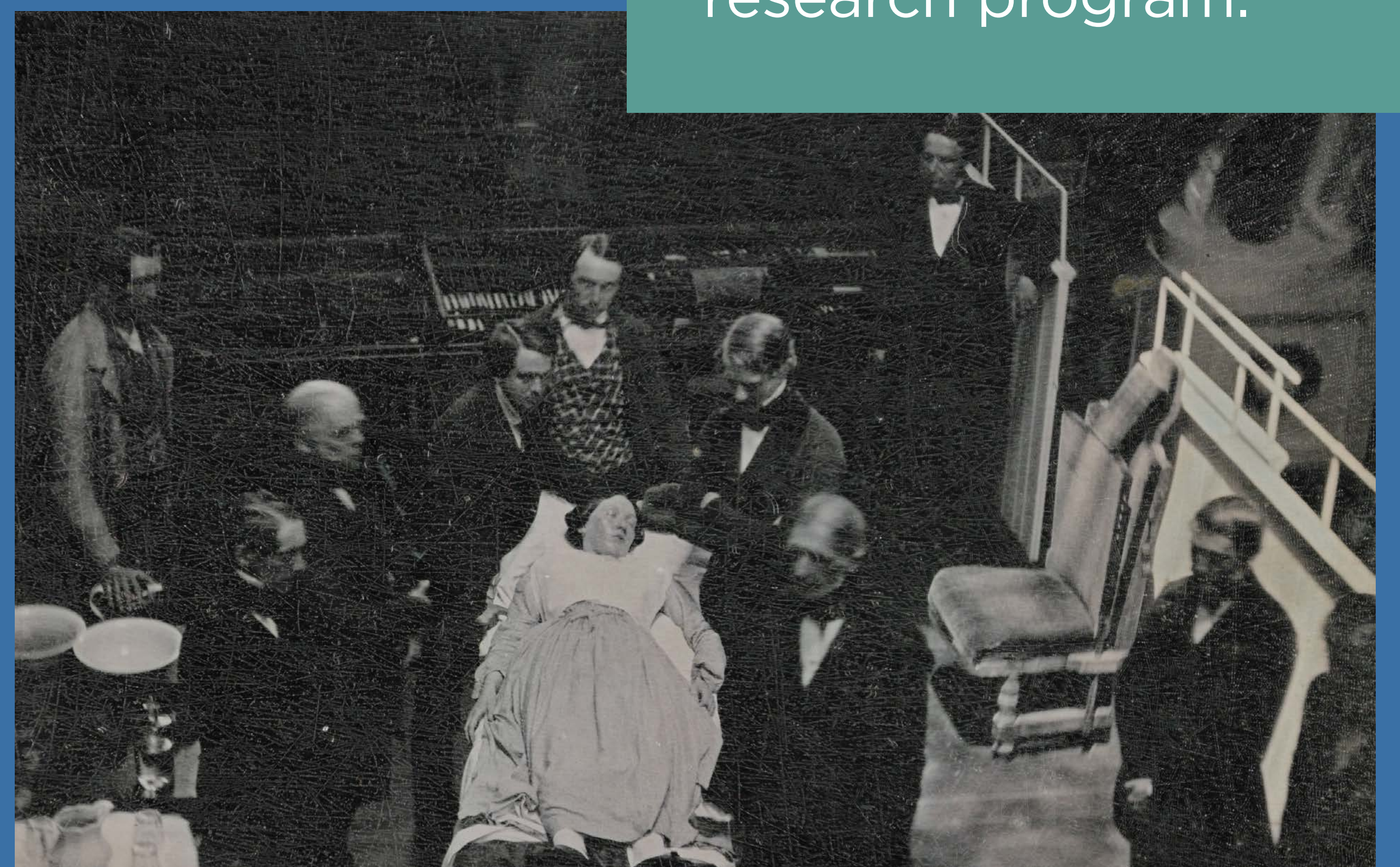
RESEARCH

Several MGH luminaries are working around the lab bench in this mid-20th century photo. Second from the right is Marian Ropes, MD, who made important contributions to the study of lupus and of synovial fluid—the fluid that protects joints. Ropes was inspired to seek a medical degree after working as a biochemistry technician at MGH. She attended Johns Hopkins; Harvard was not yet accepting women. She returned to MGH as a medical resident in 1932.

This photo also includes Joseph Aub, MD, a prolific researcher in metabolism, endocrinology and toxicology; eminent endocrinologist Fuller Albright, MD, and chief of Medical Services Walter Bauer, MD. The hospital does not have more information on E. Rossmeisl, second from the left. While Ropes was the first woman resident at MGH, many women worked here as technicians at the time. Like their male technician counterparts, their place in hospital history is poorly documented.

After the famous **ether demonstration** on October 16, 1846, in which surgical anesthesia was successfully, publicly used for the first time, surgeons at MGH continued to use ether and recorded its effects in the patients' records. Research was conducted at the hospital long before there was a formal research program.

Building on successes by other innovators around the world, teams at MGH constructed and installed multiple types of personal protection booths, including this **Hexapod**. This Plexiglass booth has arm portals on several sides to allow clinicians to safely administer coronavirus tests and keep a long line of patients moving.



TEACHING



In 1873, when trained nursing in the U.S. was in its infancy, MGH founded the **Boston Training School for Nurses**, later the Massachusetts General Hospital School of Nursing. These women comprised the class of 1886. They had newly earned the black bands on their nursing caps, which indicated graduate nurses.



Walter Cannon, MD, of Harvard Medical School and Richard Cabot, MD, of MGH created a new way to help medical students and hospital staff learn from experience—their own, but also others'. In a **clinicopathological conference** (CPC), clinicians present recent patient cases they have worked on that are used as case studies for discussion. This system develops students' critical thinking skills in medicine in a way that classroom lectures cannot. Cabot also introduced the feature “Case Records of the Massachusetts General Hospital” in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, which still runs today. Pictured is an early 20th century CPC in the amphitheater of the hospital's now-demolished Allen Street building, which also housed the Pathology Service and morgue.

The MGH Learning Laboratory uses mannequins to train clinicians on new procedures. **Prone positioning**, or turning a patient onto their stomach, is not new, but it has become much more common during the pandemic because it can help increase oxygen to the lungs. Here, a team practices proning a patient.

