For many years we have heard the national rhetoric that the police are the problem. Our profession was in shock as we watched the attack unfold against the Dallas police officers in 2016. I vividly recall what I was doing in the moment as many of you probably did as well. Having been at the White House with other law enforcement leaders discussing the President’s Task Force Report on 21st Century Policing, I was traveling home and watching the in-flight television, absorbed with feelings and gripped with emotion. I was experiencing these same emotions again recently, the night Officer Natalie Corona was ambushed and murdered in Davis, California, on January 10, 2019.

Our society is facing a crisis, one that depends on logical solutions versus emotional reactions. The death of Natalie Corona drew significant attention, but the impact it may have on our profession in the future is far from over. Several of my officers heeded the mutual-aid call that night in January. An exhaustive search for many hours led an army of officers through the streets of Davis, an unsettling war-like atmosphere that is hard to describe to those who have never served in our profession. The suspect, in an act of cowardice, placed a gun to his own head in the presence of officers, and then went inside a house. A single gunshot, which was a self-inflicted suicidal death sentence, and another traumatic scar, would soon rain down on those seeking to end the clash.

A few nights later officers in my department descended on a violent scene where a man tried to kill his own family, stabbing two of them, setting the house on fire and trapping the children inside. The manhunt lasted for hours and included several allied agencies. I could feel the stress, just like the night of Officer Corona’s death. “Shots fired” was broadcast over the radio. I knew how much danger our officers were in as they searched for this predator. The use of deadly force against this attacker ended the stressful search and triggered the officer-involved fatal-incident investigation protocol. Our city awoke never truly knowing the danger befallen on a seemingly peaceful town. However, some of our officers and dispatchers experienced a breaking point.

I drove to the crime scene and talked with officers, checking to see if they were okay. Some were reeling with emotions. One officer had also been involved in the recent...
manhunt for Natalie Corona’s killer in Davis. Struggling and needing help, he reached out to a licensed counselor with a click of a button using our department “Wellness App” on his iPhone. The next words out of his mouth got my attention, “I don’t know how much you paid for the “App” but it is worth every penny!” His revelation confirmed that our wellness culture and App were beneficial.

The Vacaville Police Department Wellness App was a solution born a year prior during a meeting I had with Dr. David Black, President and Founder of Cordico, a passionate and well-recognized psychologist and mental health expert who has focused his efforts to improve officer wellness in our profession. I shared my idea, an expectation and a call to action. I wanted to develop an App, include best-in-class tools, resources, and information to promote officer wellness and resilience, as well as make licensed clinicians just a few clicks away, in a fully anonymous environment, and put it in the hands of every officer in my department. A few months later the App was released, and my department embraced it! I quickly realized this mobile wellness app for law enforcement should be put in the hands of every first responder serving in communities across the nation. Now this powerful proactive officer wellness movement is underway.

The Cordico Law Enforcement Wellness App provides officers with instant access to a powerful on-demand wellness toolkit and best-in-class resources. One key feature of the Cordico App is that it is entirely confidential, allowing officers to receive trusted information and immediate clinical services without fear of negative repercussion, a significant barrier to officers receiving necessary help.

The wellness toolkit is interactive and practical, incorporating the best tools and resources available to help officers emotionally survive their careers. Instant self-assessment tests are one of the most engaging features of the Cordico Law Enforcement Wellness App. Officers are able to complete a variety of self-scoring tests within less than five minutes in the App, and are then provided immediate feedback and guidance based upon their results.

The vision has been to make the best quality tools and resources instantly accessible to officers in crisis. Thus the interface is designed to be intuitive and simple to navigate, while providing access to trusted content that has been selected and reviewed by law enforcement professionals, researchers, and police psychologists. (You can learn more about the Cordico Law Enforcement Wellness App here: https://www.cordico.com/police/)

As leaders within our profession, we need to advocate for healthy organizations. The question before you now is whether you are promoting a culture of wellness? It is a call to action, not just a program. We all took an oath to lead our departments. More importantly, are we caring for those that put their lives on the line every day? My hope is that you, we, promote officer wellness. As leaders we need to lead the way and care for those that are in harms way. ■