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HEALTH CARE HEROES

A DEVOTED NURSE AND HEALER ON THE FRONTLINES IN QUEENS

MARIALEAH CERVANTES

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF NURSING/HEAD
NURSE OF CRITICAL CARE,
NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/QUEENS

My role: With so many things happening at the same time, my role is very dynamic. I monitor patient care, tend to patients who are deteriorating, secure the tools doctors need for procedures, and answer calls from the ED to transfer patients.

I also manage the critical care unit with a tremendous amount of help from managers, other nurses and staff. I help coordinate admissions and transfers, support documentation, troubleshoot, step in when patients have a critical response and I make sure my team gets a break when necessary. I meet with critical care physicians throughout the day, determine which patients need to come from the ED, transfer patients, and identify how to utilize surge plan for extending extra rooms.

Impact of COVID-19: As nurses, we are healers. We are here to care for people with a loving touch and by spending time. We hold hands, we make sure families see their loved ones. The pandemic really limits that level of human connection that patients and families need so much.

But we still have that touch in other ways while wearing PPE. We take care of our patients, wash them, turn them, wipe their eyes or squeeze their hands. It's something reassuring, something that says you're not alone. We care for patients as if they were our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, uncles or aunts. They're all part of our family. We continue to be there for them.

It takes a lot out of us at the frontline. We went into this profession wanting to help and care for them, save lives and even restore lives. With this, you don't know if someone is going to make it or not. We're also not allowing families to come and see loved ones. Someone could be dying, and we can't allow their relatives to be there. That saddens me.

Connecting Families: We call families and answer their calls to help them know the status of loved ones. I take calls every day to help reduce the time other nurses and doctors have to spend speaking to families. There are so many calls every day. The families are so appreciative.

Why I'm on the frontlines: I want to be the biggest supporter and



Cervantes was featured in an April 19 photo essay in the *New York Times* magazine that highlighted the public hospital response to COVID-19.

also inspire other people to know that we can beat this. There's a war against this virus, and I want everyone out there to know that nurses are here to battle it. That's what nurses do, and this is what we believe. We are scared for our own lives and for our families, but we are strong. People support us, and when we see that, we know we are doing the right thing.

Managing Stress: Before I was quarantined, I walked. I meditate with God through prayer. I think of positive things and of better things to come. I have hope and faith. I want to inspire with the strength that God has given me. I'm Catholic, and every day I say a rosary prayer to St. Anthony, our saint of miracles.

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