

WOODHULL ER DOC EPITOMIZES GRACE UNDER FIRE

DR. MATTHEW ROBINSON

EMERGENCY MEDICINE PHYSICIAN,
NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/WOODHULL

My Role: I'm trained in emergency medicine and palliative care for the seriously ill, helping people find out what's important to them while making difficult end-of-life decisions.

As our volume of COVID-19 patients began surging, I worked in the ED managing the most critically ill patients each night. On one rough night, I and a small team of nurses managed 10 intubated patients until sunrise.

Impact of COVID-19: The hospital has done a lot to make more room for patients, and my hat is off to our colleagues from the inpatient teams and the physicians. We've expanded and opened at least four overflow units that are primarily for COVID-19 and ventilated patients.

In the Emergency Room, we work determine who needs to be admitted and who should go home. The hospital is for patients already on track for critical care. As volume goes up and we reach capacity, things back up.

Many of the patients in the ER that are admitted are still waiting for a room. Before the crisis, we usually had one patient out of 50 waiting for a room. Now, it's 25 patients out of 50, and that means less space for intake. When that happens, the waiting room starts to fill, and people get sicker in the waiting room. Capacity is the hose that backs up the ER, where we try sorting those who are more severely ill. I try to treat and discharge as many people as possible, so we don't have 100 very sick people waiting to be seen for the first time.

Why I'm on the Frontlines: I'm in the right place at the right time. I work here, and the virus came to me. I'm not suffering for mission and purpose. We are playing a part in helping society hold itself up. This is my neighborhood, my people. I have a great opportunity to make a difference in a real literal way.



Managing Stress: I have definitely been scared of what's waiting in the hospital for me. I'm tired and overwhelmed by the scale of this thing. Those are all negative, scary, angsty emotions and it's ok to feel them. My yoga and meditation practice help me with mindfulness. I acknowledge those emotions, name them, accept them and move forward. But trying to pretend that this is not scary or stressful is a fool's errand. Be willing to acknowledge things are true.