

APRIL 27, 2020

HEALTH CARE HEROES

HELPING HOMEBOUND PATIENTS



MIRLENE CHARLES-MIGHTY

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/
COMMUNITY CARE, CARE COORDINATOR

My Role: I assist my patients with social services, medications and help them stay organized with their treatment and care. I also do home visits, and accompany patients to medical or social appointments, if they need additional assistance.

Impact of COVID-19: Our team paused home visits in March, so now I work at home and travel to the office once a

week to complete paperwork. I have 30 patients on my case load, and I call each of them at least twice a week.

Although we limited visitations, I made an exception to see a chronically ill patient. He's a 70-year-old Jamaican immigrant with below-the-knee amputations and suffers from hypertension and Type II diabetes. His sister usually brings his medications, but she's sick now. So this time, I delivered his medications. When I got there, he opened the door and said, "Bless you, because I know it's hard for you." His sister thanked me for saving his life.

Easing Patient Anxiety: They're very scared and very afraid. I'm scared too. But if I show them I'm afraid, that will leave them vulnerable. I let them know that we are in this together. I tell them to focus on decreasing stress levels. There's a lot to fear with COVID-19, but think of the positive. Not everyone is dying. People do recover.

I let them know this will pass. Take your medication. Take some time away from the news. If you're watching tv, watch something that can make you laugh. Call someone, and talk

about good memories. If they have any problems, they know they can call me for support.

Why I'm on the frontlines: It's important for me to be a role model, and I have a job to do. It's my responsibility to do it with compassion.

If we are running away from COVID-19, what will happen to people who depend on me? The patients depend on me for support and guidance. COVID-19 made me realize that no matter what disease is affecting people, we can help someone be healthy, strong and give them a new look on life.

Managing Stress: I go to church services online and I pray. I speak to my church members and family. If I read the news, I read about people who recovered from COVID-19. I listen to people who have positive things to say.

I also sing sometimes so loud that my daughter tells me that I wake everyone up. People hear me and they know I'm strong. I will not break.