

“Uncontainable Joy” Upon Patient’s Recovery

DR. NOELLA BOMA

Director of Hospital Medicine, NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan



My role: I have led the team that is admitting and treating COVID-19 patients since our first patient who tested positive in early March. We admit patients directly from the Metropolitan Emergency Department and from other health system facilities such as NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst, Lincoln, and Bellevue. During this crisis, I am also coordinating the influx of health care workers who are coming in from other parts of the city or country to help.

Why I’m on the Frontlines: What’s really striking about this moment is that in 20 years since I left medical school, this is the first time I have experienced uncontainable joy when a patient finally goes home. To me, it seems recovery and death are so close to each other when you treat this disease. I am also proud to serve the Hispanic community in East Harlem in these difficult times. I identify with this community because I studied medicine in Spanish at Universidad Central Del Este in the Dominican Republic and speak the language fluently. My background, however, is Cameroonian and my first language is West African patois.

Impact of COVID: We’re seeing many COVID-19 patients who didn’t have major health concerns before getting this virus. It’s very difficult



for them and their families to find themselves in this scary situation. They rely so much on us. We are their support system. When they get to home, they cry, and we cry with joy and all they can say is “thank you” because we cannot hug each other.

Managing Stress: I am a mother of two, an 8-year-old and a 16-year old. They are currently at home

on Google classroom and one of my cousins is with them. It brings us reassurance as a family that we are doing the right thing to take care of each other, keeping social distance and sanitizing clothes, surfaces, everything when I get home. Everyone participates in that daily process. When I am home with them, we relax watching movies together and playing board games.