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HEALTH CARE HEROES

PULMONARY DOCTOR GIVES EVERY SINGLE OUNCE OF STRENGTH



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My role: As coronavirus started ramping up in the U.S., we were getting ready for what we thought was going to happen. At that time, one of our colleagues became very scared of what COVID-19 might be, so he left. I took over his rotation in the medical ICU. That's when the cases began.

A Frightening Moment: Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) is a pulmonary condition we would perhaps see in two cases a month. One night, I received two ARDS patients and I thought it was likely COVID-19 because it just presented in such a strange way. The next day, I received four patients. That's when I rang the bell and said

something incredibly horrifying is going to occur here.

Signs of Hope: We've had many of these patients with this terrible virus who had to be intubated. Many thought most would die, but many have recovered. Some have actually walked out of the hospital and gone home to their families.

On a nightly basis, I gather all the nurses, my fellows, other doctors and the residents, and I share patient stories. I know everyone is tired and scared, so I tell them about the patients who went home to their families, just like we are going home to our families. I tell them that's why we give every single ounce of strength we have to this fight - so we can make sure more of these patients go home.

Every worker in our hospital is a hero. It takes strength, dedication and courage of an entire team to be able to care of our patients. It really is a collaborative effort.

Lessons Learned: Aside from the medicine, one of the biggest things that I take home from this crisis is just how wonderful the human spirit really can be. We have great relationships at Elmhurst. The pandemic got us closer and made us see the need to work as a team to help our patients. COVID-19 not only attacks the lungs, but it attacks the kidneys, liver, central nervous system and GI system. We have to work as a team 100 percent of the time for 100 percent of the patients so that they have a fighting chance.

Managing Stress: This past weekend was the first day off I had in almost two months. What really has kept all of us going is each other. We're not only colleagues here at the hospital, but we're also friends.

When I go home to my wife Natalia and my daughters, Isabella, 9, and Sofia, 3, they've always been my support system. My wife says she's my biggest fan and supports me in everything that I know I need to do for my community.

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