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HEALTH CARE HEROES

MIDWIFE DELIVERS NEW LIFE AND HOPE

DENISE WHARTON

MIDWIFE TEAM LEADER, NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/
NORTH CENTRAL BRONX

My role: During the peak of the crisis, I began volunteering to take care of COVID-19 patients since I have a background as a medical surgical nurse, while also supporting patients in Labor and Delivery. I hadn't done in-patient work in a while, but bringing comfort to COVID-19 patients is something I'm fully trained for and was honored to do. I also remained in charge of scheduling our 17 midwives. All of them have been helping in COVID-19 response.

We've had midwives that came down with COVID-19, but everybody has stepped up to make sure all our patients are covered. I can't say enough of how proud we are of our midwives' response.

Impact of COVID-19: When we first received guidance on televisits for pregnancy patients due to COVID-19, we looked at our entire caseload to determine what was necessary to ensure healthy deliveries for both low- and high-risk patients.

We ensured that patients who came in for a sonogram or a blood draw also had their in-person appointment that day to decrease visits to the hospital and possible exposure to COVID-19. We've conducted televisits with many low-risk patients and made sure they knew how to take and report on their blood pressure. If we identified something, we would have them come in.

Birth stories during COVID-19: We test every pregnant woman that comes here in labor and the results come back quickly. So, the hardest part for us has been telling a mother in labor that she's COVID-19 positive. An important part of our work



has been to ease fears while keeping mother, baby and staff safe. We have had a few beautiful deliveries by moms who have tested positive.

Understandably, they go through an emotional roller coaster, but the relationship between moms and midwives only becomes stronger. Fortunately, all babies have tested negative so far. Midwives check a few times a week with over 20 moms who are back at home monitoring their symptoms. So far, we have delivered 184 babies since the beginning of the crisis in early March.

Managing stress: On my time off, I like to bake and clean my home and like everybody else, I love watching Netflix shows. I am a single mom of a 14-year old daughter. Once they closed schools, I arranged for my daughter to go to Georgia to be with my brother and my sister-in-law. It has been extremely hard for me to be away from her, but it's been the best thing for her. We facetime daily and I went down there to celebrate her birthday. Hopefully I can bring her home with me soon.

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