

SERVING THE HOSPITAL WHERE HE WAS BORN

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My role: I always asked God to put me where he feels I was needed most. NYC Health + Hospitals/ Harlem is the place he wanted me to be. I was born in this hospital. The day I got accepted for my residency here – I cried. Being a doctor is the role I was meant to have in life. I believe it’s an honor to do this work.

When COVID-19 Hit: I started helping out in the testing center. It was a bit slow at first – that was before the city locked down. Then the patients started coming in very fast and very sick. I never expected it to happen so quick, so bad.

Now I work with the Rapid Response Team – the RRT – on the Med/Surg floors. At the peak of the crisis, we had more than 200 patients, not counting those in the ICU. We run to the patients and try to prevent codes, fix problems. We decide if a patient should stay there or if they need escalation to the ICU, or more advanced delivery forms of oxygen. We have to determine if a patient needs to be intubated.

Why I’m on the frontlines: We had a 77-year-old Dominican woman who was having a lot of trouble breathing. Her oxygen saturation was low – so they called the RRT. I spoke with her family and discussed that she did not want to be intubated and that we would try to keep her as comfortable as possible to which they agreed. Then I just held her hand. She passed 4 days later.

It’s a crazy time. People are dying without family members at their side. It’s very isolating and lonely, even for us doctors. Sometimes we are the only person they have in those final moments. I think about that patient. She didn’t speak English. I can totally imagine how terrifying it could be when you cannot communicate. I hope I gave her some kind of peace while we held hands. I’ve held a lot of hands in the last six weeks.



Managing Stress: It’s been an emotional, chaotic time. But I’m fortunate to have amazingly supportive parents and wife. I meet up with one of my childhood friends when I get out of the hospital and we go to this little recording studio space to listen to music. That’s my stress reliever. I’m a hip-hop and R&B guy. And anything by Amy Winehouse. With the junior residents, I share a song every day – slow jams or instrumentals from my playlist – depending on the mood of the day. Yesterday, I played “Quiet Fire” by Melody Gardot. We all have a quite fire burning inside of us that we must learn to direct and give purpose to.