

FIGHTING A VIRUS, WHILE SCARED FOR OUR LIVES

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My Role: I oversee staffing-to-patient ratios for optimal care, ventilators in use and available ventilators for the incoming patients. I ensure ventilator circuits and supplies are adequate to sustain and support the surge. I also respond to administrator calls in reference to increasing ICU bed capacity to move patients from the emergency department to our inpatient area.

I also manage all the day-to-day operations of critical and non-critical care units with an enormous amount of help from respiratory therapist supervisors who help coordinate supplies and equipment needed for ICU admissions. The team also transports vented patients to and from special procedure areas, including the CT-Scan/MRI Suite.

Impact of COVID-19: As healthcare practitioners, we are trained to manage respiratory disease with ventilators and the appropriate therapies while providing optimal care to our patients and their family members. But during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have visitation limitations. It affected our ability to connect with our patients and family members.

We were pulled in every direction to ensure ventilators were available for intubations and that transport to the ICU was not delayed. We were called to install suction regulators and oxygen flowmeters in every expanded ICU bed, while making sure flow and pressures were functional and appropriate to support vented patients. Through all this rush, we had to ensure we had the proper PPE necessary to maintain safety for our staff and patients.

Why I'm on the frontlines: It takes a lot of time and effort from all the frontline team -including registered nurses, respiratory therapists, physicians and transporters- to take care of all our patients.

We are scared for our lives and the safety of our family, but we are grateful for having the opportunity to fight this virus with our knowledge. We also appreciate the support for our efforts.

At the end of the day, you take home all the good things the team was able to accomplish, and you hope all your effort and care can help save lives.

Managing stress: Before the COVID-19 pandemic, I was exercising regularly. I still go on fast walks. During this crisis, I have also learned to meditate and pray for all humanity. I'm quiet when others are anxious and stressed.

