

## PAINFUL MOMENTS AT TESTING SITES



### MAYRA WASHINGTON

NURSE PRACTITIONER,  
NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
GOTHAM HEALTH, MORRISANIA

**My Role:** I provide health care for kids from Pre-K to fifth grade in school clinics, and my job includes giving physicals and daily medications. But since schools are closed, I was called back to work at NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Morrisania. Now, I test people in the community and call them with results.

One of my middle-school students came in for a COVID-19 test. I didn't recognize him at first,

but I could see he was so scared. Then, he saw me and smiled. He remembered how I took care of him. He came up to me and said, "Hey, Ms. Washington, you helped me when my leg was hurting." It touched me to see him there. It gives me some consolation. I'm still in my community.

**Impact of COVID-19:** Now, I work with a range of patients. I went from primary care and working with little ones to seeing adults as well. It's a great learning opportunity even though this is a difficult time.

I conduct COVID-19 tests and also follow-up calls to deliver results, which include patient education and teaching. There are four other testers with me at Morrisania, and together we administer 200 tests a day. In the very beginning everyone wanted a test, and we had long lines. We swab them and send the sample to the lab. We're seeing a number of positives from people who are asymptomatic. It's an eye opener, because some of them feel fine.

But the hardest thing to do isn't administering the test - that takes only 30 seconds. Listening to patients' stories is tough. Every time someone is in front of you, there is so much pain. Someone they love or know is sick. I've seen even a widow who came in for a test after her husband died from Coronavirus. After listening and giving the test, she, like others, is left to wait for results while still wondering, "Do I have it?" "What do I do now?"

**Managing stress:** I'm conscious of the virus and how serious it is, but that doesn't stress me. I'm not afraid. Fear is what limits us and puts us in a dangerous position. When we are scared, we make mistakes. We have to be concerned and aware. For now, this is our new normal. So, I do the best I can.