

"HAPPY" MUSIC AND TEARS OF JOY WHEN PATIENTS GO HOME



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My Role: When the pandemic began, all of us had to step up to do more shifts than we normally do and fill in at odd times to help carry the load. It was horrible. If people had a chance to see how bad it was, they wouldn't be so cavalier.

Tough Days: There was a day when I was doing patient intubations with two other attending physicians. Two of us would assist as one doctor performed an intubation, and then we'd immediately shift for the next doctor to intubate. We intubated seven or eight patients in a row. It was crazy.

Another difficult day was when one attending asked me to help with one of his patients. I turned around, and it was a young lady who was talking to the patient care technician. As she was talking, she slumped over, and when we turned her over, she was dead. I can still see her face. I just couldn't understand how that could have happened.

Lessons Learned: I've been practicing for 25 years, and I've seen pretty much all the bad stuff: H1N1, H5N1, SARS, MERS and Ebola. I always felt ready. For COVID-19, I looked every day on Instagram, Reddit and Twitter to follow what people in the medical community were saying about this. That's how we learned about this virus. A lot of us use the same platforms to learn new things.

I also realized we weren't alone. For a little bit, I felt like we at Woodhull were the only ones dealing with these challenges. But then I looked around and heard about Elmhurst, then Kings County, Coney Island and hospitals outside our system. The virus didn't spare anyone.

Woodhull Teamwork: One of the things that I thought was amazing is that the hospital created four new ICUs in two days before things got bad. We knew we would have all these people needing to be ventilated, because we'd been reading and saw this was going to happen. And in two days, the hospital pulled together four ICUs. The amount of teamwork that we had here was phenomenal.

Happy Moments: They play a number of songs when patients are discharged or extubated, but the one I like best is "Happy" by Pharrell Williams. It's a great song, and it makes me happy that someone made it. The first time we heard it, I was in my office and the staff who work next door to me asked what the music is for. I said it meant someone is going home. One of them started tearing up a little bit, and then I started crying, too. A couple of times, it gave me chills. It was gorgeous to hear.