

BERTILA SANCHEZ, RN

Staff Nurse

NYC Health + Hospitals | Morrisania Health Center



A long childhood illness prompted Bertila Sanchez to enter the nursing profession, inspired by, "having been a patient myself," she recalls. "When I was a child, I spent over a year in a hospital. I knew early on that helping other people was my calling."

Sanchez is motivated by serving some of New York's most vulnerable residents, noting that she is proud of "being able to help a very underserved community, mostly immigrants from Third World countries. For many of them, coming to Morrisania is the first time in their adult life that they receive adequate healthcare, maybe even in their entire life," she points out. "Every patient that comes through these doors with chronic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes mellitus, and receives proper care from our providers, is a life saved."

Another powerful motivation for Sanchez is being part of the community and "providing real patient centered care tailored to patients' needs, beliefs, language, and culture," she comments, adding that she is constantly striving to improve. "We could do better to really provide the care that our community deserves."

Sanchez notes that nurses have faced unprecedented challenges this year during the ongoing global health crisis. "During the peak of the pandemic, I came to work every day, and doing my best even as I worked alone for several days, because my fellow nurses fell sick due to the coronavirus one by one," she remarks. "I carried on, answering a higher than usual volume of phone calls, dealing with patients who were panicking, triaging them over the phone, reassuring them, giving them hope, communicating constantly with providers, and taking care of everyone who came to the unit.

"This was a more stressful time than usual, but I took it day by day, one client at a time," she says. "I made it through, and I am still going."

Sanchez asserts that providing compassionate care is one of the most important values in nursing. "To me, compassion is being able to place yourself in somebody else's shoes, to feel their pain, to ask yourself if you are doing the best that you can to help them," she says, adding, "Seeing in each patient an individual who could be a mother, a father, a son, a daughter - an individual with his or her own history, who loves and is loved by someone, who deserves our time and care without judgment."