

Must keep going

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Learning from one another in medical encounters

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MUST KEEP GOING

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She came back after her third maternity leave
Between waves 1 and 2
Everything looked familiar but different
No hugs were allowed, just faint smiles and brief greetings

First patient assignment
COVID positive-patient #1
She searched for an N95, couldn't find one
They are all locked up now, too many stolen
No drinks allowed on the floor
Hair must be tied up and secured in a cap
No lunches with her colleagues allowed

A few weeks go by, COVID patient #1 becomes COVID patient #2 becomes a full COVID
positive patient assignment

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The medicine unit becomes a COVID positive unit
Then they take in telemetry patients, outbreak #1
Back to medicine, then it's orthopedic patients, outbreak #2
Back to COVID positive, then medicine, outbreak #3, wave 3
Back to COVID positive current timeline unknown

Go get tested they say - negative
But two colleagues and a patient positive
Go again they say - negative
But more colleagues and patients positive
Variants of concern found - go get tested 3 times in one week they say
Nose bleeds from frequent testing
At least she's negative
But not the same for some colleagues and patients

Tired, exhausted, short staffed, teary eyed, on autopilot
Hungry, thirsty, bladder stretched beyond belief
But she must keep going
Patients dying in her arms, no visitors allowed
New machinery, no time for training
Staff redeployed to other units, ICUs, others need more hands-on deck
But this unit is already so short staffed
Vaccine rollout begins, long lines, lack of supply, dosages extended, just waiting
Waiting for her turn to be protected

Must keep going
The fear of bringing this home to her little kids is overpowered by fear of the system collapse
So, she continues going
Shift by shift to connect with her nursing students who practice clinically
To learn how to teach the next generation of nurse leaders to be change agents in this new reality

To investigate what can be done to better the experience for all

She keeps going

But most importantly she keeps going for each human being in need of assistance ■