Frontline Covid Workers

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According to ‘Worldometer,’ over 5 million people have died globally from Covid-19. With the severity of this disease, it is said that frontline medical workers are in higher demand. These workers are face-to-face with this deadly disease everyday, while trying to save the lives of those around them, putting theirs at risk.

Not being at the forefront with Covid-19, some people say they forget the severity of it. Others often express that they do not think about those who have to work in the hospitals alongside Covid-19. This being said, the frontline medical workers say they are exhausting themselves working day and night to make sure the covid patients survive.

“It’s not unusual for us to work 10 to 12 hours a day, plus weekends and holidays,” Laura Stamp, Mercy Health Nurse Anesthetist, said.

Working long hours like these, the nurses see so much of what happens to the Covid-19 patients. The nurses say they often see these patients in a wide variety, whether it’s before a surgery, in a pain clinic or intubating them so they can still breathe. One way or another, they are in contact everyday.

“Many times we are the last person they will ever see,” Stamp said.

The nurses say they are put in a tough spot everyday because it doesn't matter if the patient tested positive for Covid-19, they still have to do their job. With this, they do take extra precautions because they do not want to get sick alongside the patients.

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Frontline Covid Workers

Ross

Page 2

“We are taking the usual precautions such as masks, shields, gowns and so on. We are requiring all patients going under general anesthesia to have a Covid test. We have an operating room strictly for covid patients. We are putting special filters on our ventilators as well. We have restrictions on visitors as well,” Linda Berry, Mercy Health Nurse Anesthetist, said.

With the constant worrying about their own health and their patients' health due to Covid-19, the nurses say they are mentally drained. Dealing with this disease up close not only has an impact on the nurses physical health, but also their mental health.

“I did go through a hard time mentally for the first year. Definitely a mental toll on us all. With the escalating surge of Covid-19 we cannot keep up with the flood of unvaccinated people. We are all burnt out. Also being a liaison to the patient's family can be tough and watching someone die from covid is just heartbreaking,” Stamp said.

With this in mind, people say it is not a surprise to hear that the number of nurses is declining due to Covid-19. With the added stress of getting the disease while having to be around the patients fighting for their lives, the nurses say they do not want to do it anymore. This could mean taking time off or quitting completely, either way the nurses’ numbers are declining.

Stamp said, “​​There are approximately 55,000 CRNA’s in the US. It is predicted up to 10% are leaving their jobs due to the pandemic. It is predicted 9.5% of nurses have left their positions due to covid with another 17% considering leaving.”

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Frontline Covid Workers

Ross

Page 3

Not only are the frontline workers affected by the pandemic, the students in nursing are also affected deeply. They have their education to think about, alongside helping patients and keeping themselves healthy. They say learning from home, instead of hands on, is just not the same. Many suggest their education is hindered by the pandemic.

“Unfortunately, learning via online classes has some disadvantages. You’re not as easily able to ask questions or get the explanation you want. I think covid is a minor setback to the education process,” Tom Merva, Registered Nurse/Nurse Anesthetist Student, said.

The number of Covid-19 patients is continuously fluctuating, along with its death rate. According to the infographic, the world is seeing a wide range of deaths, fluctuating between 10,000 and 18,000 deaths daily. The vaccine helps, but the nurses are still seeing tons of patients affected by Covid-19. Because of this, their mental health is decreasing, making them less inclined to work in their trained field. The number of nurses is declining because of the added pressure the pandemic brought to their lives. Even when they take extra precautions, the nurses say they still do not feel completely safe from Covid-19.

“I can’t say exactly what those nurses had to go through looking death in the eyes every day,” Merva said.

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Frontline Covid Workers

Ross

Page 4

Works Cited

Linda Berry

Nurse Anesthetist

330-519-2286

Linda talked to me about her hours, how she was impacted, and the precautions everyone takes since Covid-19 struck.

Laura Stamp

Nurse Anesthetist

330-207-9624

Laura talked to me about her day to day, the changes in the nursing staff, how it impacted her and those around her, and the hours she works.

Tom Merva

Registered Nurse/Nurse Anesthetist Student

330-942-3807

Tom talked to me about being a student during this time and how it impacted his education.

Non-interview source: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

<https://covid19.youngstownohio.gov/>

Infographic:

