

# The Lived Experience of Providing Nursing Care During a Pandemic: A Vermont Perspective (May-June 2020)

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# Background

- January 7, 2020: Coronavirus confirmed in China
- March 7, 2020: First COVID-19 patient in State of Vermont
- March 13, 2020: Vermont State of Emergency order
- March 16, 2020: Hospital instituted a No Visitor Policy
- March 20, 2020: All non-essential adult elective surgery and medical surgical procedures suspended

# Specific Aim

- To develop a broader understanding of the perceptions of professional nurses' lived experience of providing nursing care during the COVID-19 pandemic

# Methodology

- Qualitative, phenomenology design
- IRB approved
- Email invitation sent to all (n=1992) professional nurses working at an academic medical center in Vermont, USA
- REDCap® confidential survey
- Data collected May 25-June 7, 2020
- Colaizzi's 7-step method guided data analysis

# Sample

175 nurses (8.7% response rate)

- Staff Nurse = 141 (81%)
- APRN = 4 (2%)
- Other = 30 (17%)

53 (30%) nurses had taken care of a patient testing positive for COVID-19

# Results

What was the lived experience of providing nursing care during the pandemic?

- Theme #1: ***It Was a Rollercoaster Ride***
- Theme #2: ***I Am Proud to Be a Nurse***
- Theme #3: ***We Adapted to Provide the Best Care***

# Theme #1: It Was a Rollercoaster Ride

- At first it was scary
- Things were unexpected and surreal
- The fear of the unknown continues
- I feel grateful

# Theme #2: I Am Proud to Be a Nurse

- We're not heroes, we're just doing our job

# Theme #3: We Adapted to Provide the Best Care

- We would fill in for family

# Discussion

- Sample
  - No difference in responses if caring for pts with Covid 19 or not
- It was scary
  - Protracted pandemic strained nurses' ability to cope
  - New fears – financial insecurity
- Pride
  - Delivered high quality care despite the unknown
  - Resilience
- Hero
  - Not universally embraced
  - Danish experience similar, detrimental to the profession?
- Provided the best care

# Strengths and Limitations

- Strengths:
  - Large sample size
  - Diverse research team
  - Efforts to promote trustworthiness
- Limitations:
  - Vermont did not experience a COVID-19 surge
  - Electronic survey

# Recommendations

- Strategies are needed to lessen nurse anxiety and fear
- Create a pandemic visitation policy that supports patient-family centered care
- Express gratitude to front line and behind the scenes nurses,
- Promote nurses as prepared, knowledgeable, and dedicated professionals that moves beyond the hero image

# Future Research

- How do nurses experience providing care during a prolonged national pandemic?
- What are the short-term and long-term consequences experienced by patients, families and nurses related to the implementation of a no-visitor policy?
- Does providing direct care to patients testing positive to COVID-19 impact a nurse's career trajectory?

# Conclusion

- Nurses are proud of the care provided during the pandemic
- Despite experiencing fear and anxiety, nurses committed to providing high quality patient/family centered care
- Even in a pandemic, nurses are resilient and able to experience gratitude

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