

# Providing Nursing Care as the Country Continues to Experience a Pandemic (December 2020)

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# May/June 2020: Lived Experience of Providing Nursing Care during a Pandemic

- **Theme #1: It was a roller coaster ride**
  - At first it was scary
  - Things were unexpected and surreal
  - The fear of 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

# COVID Timeline

- July 10, 2020: VT reports no COVID deaths for 30 days
- July 24, 2020: Executive order requiring masks in VT
- November 11, 2020: VT reports 72 cases
- November 17, 2020: Governor Scott prohibits multi-family gatherings for holidays, closes restaurants at 10 PM
- December 15, 2020: First vaccine given in Vermont

# Problem

- The COVID-19 pandemic has continued for 6 months since the initial survey. Vermont continues to not experience a surge in COVID-19 cases, unlike other areas in the country.
  - Are nurses still experiencing the pandemic as a rollercoaster ride that never ends?
  - Are nurses still fearful of what the future may hold?
  - Are nurses still proud of their ability to provide care?

# Specific Aim

- To develop a broader, longitudinal understanding of the perceptions of professional nurses' lived experience of providing nursing care while the nation experiences an on-going COVID-19 pandemic

# Methodology

- Qualitative, phenomenology design
- Convenience sample of professional nurses
- Author created confidential electronic REDCap® survey
- Data collected December 14-27, 2020
- Data analysis followed Colaizzi's (1978) method

# Sample

- 166 nurses (~8% response rate)
  - Staff Nurse = 130 (78%)
  - APRN = 5 (3%)
  - LPN = 5 (3%)
  - Nurse Educator/Nurse Leader = 11 (7%)
  - Travel Nurse = 7 (4%)
  - Other = 8 (5%)
- 7 started first professional nursing position after March 2020
- 63 (37.6%) cared for a patient testing positive for COVID-19

# Results

- Theme #1: It feels like a marathon that won't end
- Theme #2: Take care of yourself or you cannot take care of anyone else effectively
- Theme #3: I'm a nurse so I can take care of sick patients however, it is harder to go to work now
- Theme #4: It is challenging not to be angry



# Theme #1: It feels like a marathon that won't end

- We are all nearing the end of our rope
- It's unlike anything I've experienced in my career
- Remain hopeful (there is a light at the end of the tunnel)

## **Theme #2: Take care of yourself or you cannot take care of anyone else effectively**

- Focus on self-care and mental health
- Follow the science

## **Theme #3: I'm a nurse so I can take care of sick patients however, it is harder to go to work now**

- Everything is different and takes more effort
- Patients are sicker
- Role is expanded

# Theme #4: It is challenging not to be angry

- You didn't take precautions and now want nurses to take care of you
- Need to police everyone
- Nurses are not welcomed in public
- Management needs to consider the nurse, not the budget

# Discussion

- Marathon
- Need to move beyond palliative coping strategies
- Role of the nurse
- Hard not to be angry
  - Social Contract

# Strengths and Limitations

- Strengths:
  - Confidential survey
  - Diverse research team
  - Actions taken to promote trustworthiness
- Limitations:
  - Vaccine rollout happened during data collection
  - Electronic survey
  - Computer “glitches” prior to and during data collection

# Recommendations

- Social contract between community and nursing needs clarified/strengthened
- Actions are needed to address the causes of stress.  
Nurses need to move beyond palliative coping strategies addressing perception and implement direct action coping strategies

# Future Research

- What are the long-term consequences to nurses, organizations and communities related to the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How has the pandemic impacted or changed the nurse's role and responsibilities within the interdisciplinary team?
- What workload strategies are most effective to address sudden and sustained changes in overall patient acuity throughout an organization?
- What is the role of the healthcare team and visitation when providing care based on the Patient & Family Centered Care Model?
- What are the causes of nurse stress? What actions can nurses/nurse leaders implement to minimize/prevent these stressors from occurring during future pandemics?



# Conclusion

- As the pandemic continues, nurses remain committed to meeting patient needs
- The nurse's role is becoming more difficult due to sicker patients as well as nurse exhaustion and stress
- The social contract between society and nursing is being threatened

# References

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# Discussion with Audience