

Nursing: Living with Purpose in Times of Pandemic

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In my 10 years as a nurse, I have been fortunate to work in the clinical areas of emergencies, coronary care unit and hospitalization, simultaneously as a university teacher and from the area of Nursing Management leading quality processes, education and research in institutions of reference for Colombia. It has been a journey of great learnings, challenges and satisfactions for patients who succeed, students who become colleagues remembering your teachings, processes at the organizational level that are enriched with your personal stamp and research projects that strengthen the disciplinary exercise of Nursing.

When the 2020 declared by the WHO began with the Year of Nursing, I particularly declared it “My year of Blessing”, even somewhat upset by the working conditions of nursing in Colombia, I decided to resume the care area in a prominent cardiovascular center in the country, performing with the charisma and love that characterize me my art of caring for patients in different clinical conditions, and continue giving free rein to my research projects and new personal initiatives that make me happy and complement my desire to transcend in the lives of many. Sometimes, when you have a master’s degree, a second language and some academic achievements, the common denominator of your colleagues tends to think that you will not return to the care of patients and will dedicate yourself merely to administrative matters; However, I think otherwise. The path that I have traveled to date has prepared me precisely for this moment in history, it has made me a better nurse for my patients and projects, regardless of the service in which I work. Being a nurse is my passion. However, caring for patients of high or low complexity does not make you more or less professional: the important thing is how much you make a difference in the life of that human being who is in your care and the holistic approach that you give while taking care of him. In my professional essence for care, I combine critical thinking in the light of scientific evidence, oriented under theoretical and disciplinary foundations; but above all, leaving my personal mark on those subjects of care.

As the pandemic progressed worldwide, I knew that soon all of us in the clinic were going to be exposed in some way to the virus, to contagion, to social stigma, to the fear of comprehensively caring for positive patients, and so it was. Over the days my induction and training process had ended and I was happy because I had always dreamed of working there, but God had chosen it to be at this moment in history and in my life. The first time I came into contact with a SARS Cov-2 positive patient, I experienced, perhaps like many health professionals, some fear of contagion. However, I felt very safe because I was using all the elements of personal protection according to protocol, because I had the knowledge to respond to the physiological and human needs of my patients and to have a strong immune system as a backup. In the midst of the loneliness of these times I was grateful for living alone and many kilometers away from my parents, who due to their risk factors did not dare to visit so as not to expose them. Days later they changed my service and I was no longer in the Covid area; however, protection measures are implemented in all areas of the clinic and the aim is to minimize epidemiological links. It caught my attention in my day-to-day work, receiving patients from Covid services, either by ruling out their infection or by resolution of their viral picture, patients with many human needs, happy to receive the warmth of our care and feel that they had already gotten out of danger; In

this way, I reaffirmed my conviction that care goes beyond the pharmacological and procedural, that patients long to be listened to and taken into account when we establish their care goals, that families at home and in waiting rooms need to be informed and educated in the face of their patient. And mainly, I corroborated that patients, families and health professionals, each one of us is fighting a personal battle to achieve a goal. Perhaps for some it implies their maxim: reaching the end of the day alive.

On July 28, I consulted my clinic for presenting symptoms suggestive for Covid-19. After the physical examination and PCR, the diagnosis is confirmed, so I begin isolation at home. Seeing the positive for SARS Cov-2 on my screen carries mixed feelings: on the one hand, the deep gratitude for only having symptoms of low complexity, without respiratory or hemodynamic compromise and, on the other hand, the fear of being alone, without family, in a city distant from yours and locked up for at least 14 days so as not to be a source of contagion from anyone else. At this time the value of words becomes very relevant, those that give you encouragement and hope, through virtuality the unconditional support of your family and friends, also especially when the motivational message comes from your employer. That "Get well, we are waiting for you" was recorded in my mind and I was certain that it would be. I still have many lives to continue caring for when I am completely asymptomatic and return to continue my mission: Be a nurse.

During my isolation I have had time to write, investigate, learn, reflect, undertake, value; but above all, to understand from the patient's perspective, the meaning of every detail that counts during the care of the disease.

Nursing has developed and professionalized in times of extreme adversity, from the Crimean War 200 years ago to today. Being a care professional in times of pandemic reveals countless challenges as a professional, as a human being, as men and women who study to intervene in health and disease processes, without neglecting the invisible nursing care, which is our concern. Differentiating factor among the other members of the health team.

So, dear nurse, regardless of whether you are leading a hospital, a college, a program, a project, a research, a high or low complexity service, you are called to be light in the midst of the pandemic. You are called to make a difference there and impact lives with your care, because you are made with seeds of greatness to lead many patients to recover their life, their health and well-being. You have everything to do it: from the most sophisticated elements such as an extracorporeal circulation circuit, to the simplest such as a smile to regain health in an individual, family or community.

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