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In My Opinion

Reflections of a COVID-19 Graduate Nurse Student

Vanessa d’Aquin, MSN, RN

As another semester comes to an end, this should be a time of celebrating milestones met and a time to set new goals. The word “should” sets the scene of a bittersweet storm that swept over the world. In an attempt to decrease the devouring effects of the storm, society came to a screeching halt. Unemployment rates increased, businesses closed, and school years abruptly ended. From this, health care rose. A field that has always existed, that has always been present when needed, is now the backbone of society. As a critical care nurse, I have been surge planning, looking at the data, following the treatment modalities, and implementing orders of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) patients. In reality, every personal protective equipment available was donned, every medical equipment was used, and every ounce of evidence-based care was thrown at these patients. Each day, the care provided seemed to be an experiment. How reliable is the rapid COVID-19 test? What precautions should be used and when? Is the infamous N95 mask reusable? Should a patient be placed on a ventilator and risk greater deterioration or be allowed to remain in respiratory distress?

What will my future as a nurse practitioner look like? Are my goals still the same as they were when I started my graduate program? How will I respond when the facility I am working at limits visits or closes? How will I manage chronically ill patients? Will I be part of advance directive planning if a patient who has tested positive for COVID-19 is now declining? These questions are now integrated into my future goals. The journey I embarked on focused on goals of providing optimal preventive care has now broadened to include the management of the acute dangers posed by a virus and psychosocial well-being.

The change in society has allowed for the future of our careers to be reflected upon. Do not allow chaos to be the reason you do not succeed. This is not the change we expected when we embarked on this journey to become advance practice nurses. It is so much more. We are in the growing process of a pandemic. Success is the only option we have—if not for us, for patients and their families.

Vanessa d’Aquin, MSN, RN, CCRN, is a critical care nurse and family nurse practitioner student at the University of West Florida in Pensacola, FL, and can be contacted at vnd3@students.uwf.edu.