

Adventist Health Ukiah Valley post on Facebook - Dec. 7 2020

Throughout these dark times, our team's spirit and dedication shines. In this week's Stories from the Frontlines, we share Nick Flynn's story, a nurse who works in our Intensive Care Unit or ICU. Nick and his team have cared for many COVID-19 patients since the start of this pandemic. As we start seeing a surge of cases nationwide, and as his team continues to serve on the front lines, Nick says, the community can also do their part. "They can do their part by taking this virus seriously. I've seen what it can do to patients and I wouldn't wish it on anyone. They can do their part by following CDC guidelines, wearing a mask, not gathering and social distancing, especially as we go into the holidays."

Nick says one of the most challenging aspect of this pandemic is the isolation for patients and the fact that they can't see their families. "I can see our patients really having a hard time with being alone. It's hard enough when you're sick but the isolation makes it more challenging. But we try to do the best we can. Fortunately, we have a large window in our ICU so they can see their families. While they can't physically touch them and they can't be in the same room, they see wave, or smile, post some pictures or messages to lift them up. We also work really hard to facilitate other ways of connecting, such as video calls. We have Ipads that we can provide if they don't have one."

The isolation is even more challenging or profound when a patient dies and their family is unable to be there for a final goodbye. "Having them die alone, not having their family with them is one of the most devastating parts of this." When they are able to plan ahead, Nick says sometimes, they are able to have one family member to be with them who is given PPE to make sure they are protected. Although a lot of times, it's not always possible. "When that happens, we stay with them and hold their hand and provide as much comfort and make sure they have someone when they pass."

More than nurses, Nick says a lot of what they do during the patient's stay and as part of their healing process is become their family and their

biggest cheerleaders. “The virus is hard on the body and the isolation adds another challenge and for some it's for the long-haul. Some of our patients are here for three weeks sometimes and it can get tiring to keep fighting. I noticed that when their spirits are up, their bodies are able to fight it more. So we try to give them hope, keep them positive, spend more time with them. Let them know they're not alone. We tell them ‘While you can't have your family, we're here for you and while you're here, we will be your biggest family and cheerleaders and we will help you through this together.’ It's really important for them to realize that.”

Throughout this fight, Nick says there are some good times and the not-so-good ones and he relies on his team to get through it. “It's hard when we lose someone. But we're a tight-knit team, like a family, so we talk each other through and we try to keep each other up. We tell each other ‘yes it happened, but we've got to keep going because there's more people that need us. We have to keep the fight.’”

Looking back at the past nine months, Nick says it's his team and their dedication that he's most proud of. “I'm proud of our ICU team. Everyone is dedicated, we've learned a lot and we've learned in such a short time. I'm inspired of the way our team has adapted and stepped up and have really come together for our patients.”

Thank you, Nick and the rest of our ICU team for your dedication in caring for our community.

#Togetherinspired #maskupmendo #maskup #HealthcareHeroes