

Full plate Spilled: Essential Healthcare in a Pandemic

DISCLAIMER: This item may have been submitted in response to a school assignment prompt. See Linked Data.

I've lived in New York for 5 years, moving at 18 and worked my way up to feeling at home here. I'm a full spectrum doula (a non-medical birth support coach), a public health student, and healthcare worker. Right before the pandemic I was very busy. I had a birth client who was also my friend who gave birth on Tuesday, March 10th. That was the day the South Brooklyn Maimonides Hospital had it's first two Covid patients. I was kicked out that evening as were all non-birth parents in the maternity ward which was heartbreaking as my client had a difficult pregnancy and a c-section earlier that day. I was the only person allowed in the operating room while the baby was born. On Friday is when everything changed as the pandemic was announced when the baby was 3 days old. My last good moments before quarantine was holding the newborn daughter of my client, reading the news on the TV while my client slept. I was worried about what would happen to them and for my own health as I have health conditions that put me at risk for worse outcomes.

I work my main job as a HIV prevention and HIV treatment navigator at a major health clinic conglomerate. We had stopped all in person appointments the following week on March 16th, but it was too late, in our 14 clinics we had 2 co-workers die from Covid-19. In my clinic alone there were 11 cases within our staff. I got sick on March 21st, and had what was diagnosed as pneumonia (although my doctor believes it was covid that hid in my lungs and was not detected by tests.) I couldn't breathe most nights and while

quarantined at my friend's two bedroom apartment I found my fingers and toes turning blue and had a fever of 102 for over a week. My job was in chaos, half staff people working from home, and all essential staff coming in to report in person. Just two weeks after getting ill and still recovering from pneumonia I had to return to do in person care at the peak of NYs Covid-19 first wave. Due to a loss in funding we did not and still do not receive any hazard pay to come in. In my first two weeks back, my godfather's healthy mother died of covid, my high school best friend's mother Carolyn died of covid on March 28th and on April 6th her brother Thomas died on his 30th birthday. By May 1st I was still going to work every day and had lost 8 people in my life to Covid-19, such a high number that I still haven't come to terms with. I have recovered from my pneumonia and thankfully have now tested negative for covid 5 times since March, however the fear is still there if I were to get it from my in person patients. I had to stop doing doula work, which is a passion of mine. However there have been some positives to make things a little easier. I became a godmother. My client's baby is 6 months old and thriving. I'm fortunate to be employed during a time of such financial upheaval. I am also fortunate enough to be in therapy for my mental health which has suffered during this time. I hope this pandemic ends soon and wish no one will have to endure what I've had to go through.