

Community Conversations NJYSA COVID-19 Project

Participant #449

Interview conducted and transcribed by Amani Soto on 1/20/2021

Interviewer: Good morning, my name is Amani, and I am working alongside the YMCA on a project called Community Conversations. Community Conversations is a project where we collect some experiences amongst those who have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. I chose to interview you because I know you have recently made a big career change within the medical field and I definitely wanted to get your input.

Participant: I would love to participate in this project. And yes, I recently had transition from being the diagnostic imaging x-ray supervisor to now being the diagnostic imaging manager multiple modalities such as x-ray, ultrasound, vascular, and nuclear medicine. To say I now have my hands full would be an understatement.

I: I do not doubt that it must have been extremely difficult in the beginning because now, instead of being responsible for just one department, you were now responsible for several.

P: It really was, but I had to work through the difficulties because we were all now dealing with something that was unknown to us.

I: How seriously did you take the pandemic when it first surfaced in the United States?

P: In my opinion, nobody really knows when the pandemic actually hit. We were definitely not prepared. Hospital volume just kept increasing with “isolation patients” coming into the ED, some very sick. In the beginning the ED was continuing their “normal” ordering of procedures due to patient symptoms because they didn’t know what they were dealing with.

I: Have you seen any changes in your life since the onset of the pandemic?

P: Every day we were given different protocols from the CDC. It took at least a week before the ED protocol started changing for patients entering the ED. Work transitioned into 7 days a week in the beginning of the pandemic, to help support all shifts and be readily available for new updates from infection control. The biggest change since March 20th was the closing of the schools. Transitioning to homeschool was extremely difficult for my children, as they had never done it before. The school system was not prepared, and it took a long time for them to have somewhat of a reliable system in place. The quarantine that resulted enabled more family time at home. Food shopping became a nightmare, with many needed products becoming unavailable such as toiletries.

I: The scariest moment for me was when I was unable to find any toilet paper. I had actually broken down and cried at work because I was so stressed that I could not find any toilet paper. Luckily, a co-worker of mine had an extra pack in her car and she was willing to give it to me. Now every time I go food shopping, I buy just one pack because I cannot go through that again.

P: I completely understand where you are coming from. I live with my husband and my three boys (18, 10, and 8) so I understand the need for toilet paper (laughing).

I: Do you think you are balancing your work and personal life equally during this time?

P: My work life and personal life are definitely more stressful. While the pandemic has allowed more family time, the kids were also experiencing issues with the lock down in the house. They totally lost focus of school and not being able to leave the house really hit them. It was hard not to see our family and friends. Zoom meetings started to become the norm for keeping in touch with everyone. Work still is very hard. Staff still exhibit a lot of anxiety about the virus.

I: Have there been any challenges for you or your family during/amidst Covid-19?

P: The hardest challenge was definitely homeschooling my younger boys. It has been very difficult keeping them engaged this year. The back and forth with school closings, the ½ day cohorts has had a negative impact.

I: I can't relate since I don't have kids, but I am going to school and can relate to the difficulty in staying focused. I had just begun the Masters program in January and we were only three months in, and I didn't know if I could mentally take on working in the hospital and doing school once I got home. Did you find anything that helped you during this difficult time?

P: When the state decided to shut down and have a majority of the people quarantine, there wasn't a lot "running" around being done. There was no obligation to be somewhere and weekends became somewhat relaxed.

I: Are you willing to get the Covid-19 vaccine when it is available?

P: I did receive the vaccine, however I was against it at first. I think there are so many unknowns about it that I wasn't going to get it. However, I did finally get it because I think it is the only thing that will help get us back to somewhat of normalcy, and go out without the mask.

I: Do you have any fears moving forward?

P: My greatest fear is that it will take a long time to go back to the life we once lived where we can go out without masks, book a vacation to any destination, and gather with family and friends without putting anyone at risk. Also, that in the future, we will learn the risks of having the vaccine.

I: Learning about potential risk after already receiving the vaccine is something that has always made me very unsure as to whether or not I would get the vaccine, which is why I choose not to at this time. Was there anything that you or anyone else could have done differently?

P: I wish we had our staff better prepared for when the pandemic hit. I wish we had a better supply of PPE readily available from the beginning. I also wish the strict protocols that are in place now were set in the beginning. Less staff would have been exposed.

I: You are very dedicated to making sure your staff is safe and that is great to hear. I want to thank you for taking the time and participating in this interview.

P: Thank you for having me. Also, good luck on finishing your Masters.

I: Thank you.