

# Elliot Front Line Nurse Gives Emotional Look at Work During COVID-19 Pandemic

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“It’s extremely hard and wonderful all at the same time.” That’s what Mary Seigle, a Resource Nurse, in the CICU at Elliot Health System is saying about being on the front lines.

She’s taking care of both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients who require hospitalization; from mild to severe illnesses. “Many people say this isn’t what we signed up for. This is exactly what I signed up for. To care for people at their worst in the most difficult times,” Seigle said.

When asked what scares her about this pandemic, she said it’s not taking care of COVID-19 patients, it’s the unknown. “The financial situation of hospitals around the country, small businesses, the economy as a whole. The mental health of everyone from front line staff to those being asked to halt their life,” Seigle explains.

She describes COVID-19 as a virus, much like the flu or other flu-like viruses. However, we don’t completely understand it yet, and some peoples’ bodies have an extreme immune reaction causing many complications. “I hope that people take this time to look

at outcomes and numbers, and truly understand why a lot of our new practices should be enacted every flu season,” Seigle said.

Many patients at Elliot’s CICU have recovered from COVID-19. “I will now forever cry when I hear ‘Here Comes the Sun’ by the Beatles,” Seigle said. That song is played when a COVID-19 patient is discharged from the hospital and nurses line the hallway to say goodbye.

But, she says “We’ve also had people not recover and to watch someone die from this virus is not easy. It’s very hard to manage them and keep them comfortable. That is difficult for a nurse, as we always want to do everything in our power to keep our patients comfortable, especially when they are dying.”

When working with COVID-19 patients, Seigle wears an N95 mask, face shield, bonnet, gown, gloves, and booties. She wears a surgical mask when she’s not working directly with COVID-19 patients.

To protect her family from getting exposed, she takes extra safety precautions when she gets home. “My poor neighbors! I strip outside and leave my clothes in a bag, shoes on the steps, nothing comes in. Then I shower immediately. This is very hard because I have a baby and toddler, and they don’t understand why mommy can’t touch them right away when I get home.”

She also says Lysol spray is her best friend and she’s using this time to teach cough and sneeze etiquette and handwashing to her 3-year-old.

Seigle wants the community to “have grace with healthcare workers even once this is phasing out. We don’t get a break, a time to recharge, or decompress. We go from the pandemic right back in to everyday work life and even when there isn’t a pandemic, inpatient nursing and care is not easy!”

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