

## Must keep going

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Learning from one another in medical encounters

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## MUST KEEP GOING

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**S**he came back after her third maternity leave  
Between waves 1 and 2  
Everything looked familiar but different  
No hugs were allowed, just faint smiles and brief greetings

First patient assignment  
COVID positive-patient #1  
She searched for an N95, couldn't find one  
They are all locked up now, too many stolen  
No drinks allowed on the floor  
Hair must be tied up and secured in a cap  
No lunches with her colleagues allowed

A few weeks go by, COVID patient #1 becomes COVID patient #2 becomes a full COVID  
positive patient assignment

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The medicine unit becomes a COVID positive unit  
Then they take in telemetry patients, outbreak #1  
Back to medicine, then it's orthopedic patients, outbreak #2  
Back to COVID positive, then medicine, outbreak #3, wave 3  
Back to COVID positive current timeline unknown

Go get tested they say - negative  
But two colleagues and a patient positive  
Go again they say - negative  
But more colleagues and patients positive  
Variants of concern found - go get tested 3 times in one week they say  
Nose bleeds from frequent testing  
At least she's negative  
But not the same for some colleagues and patients

Tired, exhausted, short staffed, teary eyed, on autopilot  
Hungry, thirsty, bladder stretched beyond belief  
But she must keep going  
Patients dying in her arms, no visitors allowed  
New machinery, no time for training  
Staff redeployed to other units, ICUs, others need more hands-on deck  
But this unit is already so short staffed  
Vaccine rollout begins, long lines, lack of supply, dosages extended, just waiting  
Waiting for her turn to be protected

Must keep going  
The fear of bringing this home to her little kids is overpowered by fear of the system collapse  
So, she continues going  
Shift by shift to connect with her nursing students who practice clinically  
To learn how to teach the next generation of nurse leaders to be change agents in this new reality

To investigate what can be done to better the experience for all

She keeps going

But most importantly she keeps going for each human being in need of assistance ■