

ADVOCACY

NEW GRADUATE RE-DEPLOYED COVID-19 STORIES

As a recent graduate and new employee of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, it was a nerve-racking experience being re-deployed to a new hospital, to help with the Covid-19 efforts. I was quickly oriented to the hospital and to its Covid-19 designated units. I attended several information sessions about the virus and how the hospital was making changes to prepare for an outbreak. The process of deciding which physiotherapists were going to be the “designated Covid-19 physiotherapists” went by seniority – the people at the top of the list had the option to say “yes” or “no”. As the newest employee, I am at the bottom of the seniority list, therefore it was likely that I would be chosen. This news provoked a great deal of pressure and stress, as this type of situation is not something we prepared for in school.

In preparation for treating Covid-19 positive patients, our physiotherapy team watched several online learning modules to refresh our skills with mobilization of patients on ventilators, and strict guidelines for aerosol generating procedures. We also learned certain techniques to be used in more severe cases of Covid-19, such as proning patients in the Intensive Care Unit who were ventilated. Our rehabilitation team became extremely cautious with donning and doffing of personal protective equipment (PPE), and were our coworkers “watch dogs” to make sure we applied it properly. Our team has grown very close during these intense times, as we became each other’s protectors, in a sense.

Our management team made a major change to our schedule in preparation for Covid-19, and changed our shifts to 12-hour coverage, with physiotherapists at the hospital 7 days a week. This change ensured staff was always present and ready to be called to the Covid-19 unit if necessary. As a staff that is used to 8-hour shifts, the increase in time spent at the hospital has taken a toll on our minds and bodies.

Fortunately, the virus has stayed relatively controlled in my region, and physiotherapy has not yet been consulted for the few positive patients we’ve had on the Covid-19 units. Although this has been an incredibly stressful time for health care workers, it has no doubt made us a stronger physiotherapy team moving forward.

Written by Shannon MacDonald, Advocacy Committee