

Description

A Sparkle of Hope

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Waiting for news

The dusk lighting settled into my Manhattan living room, falling gently onto my slippered feet, comfortably tucked away from the chilled March air. I sat anxiously stitching away at the garter and eyelet pattern of the shawl I had recently begun knitting, as I waited for a text from my classmate and colleague regarding our intrapartum clinical site, the

possible detection of COVID-19 there and the subsequent discontinuation of our clinical practice. Over the last week, several of my cohort had received news of positive cases at their respective sites, and within a matter of hours they had been informed that they would not be able to continue their learning experience. As the light slowly faded outside my window, I could feel the darkness of COVID-19, slowly creeping into the city around me.

An inevitability?



Press coverage of this pandemic started off with a news article here and there, warning of a flu-like disease infiltrating what seemed, at the time, like a far-off land. In February, with few reports coming in from abroad, the idea of a worldwide state of emergency seemed far-fetched, but before long, as the suffocating blanket of COVID continued its course across Europe, the reality of it spreading through the United States seemed inevitable. I am originally from Oregon and moved to New York to undertake my midwifery training. I knew my newfound home would be greatly impacted by the pandemic, and as a full-time midwifery student participating in both academic study and clinical practice, considerable changes to my education were anticipated. We were six weeks (halfway through) our intrapartum rotation at this point, and riding the trajectory of an amazing, fulfilling, sometimes difficult and occasionally devastating learning curve we had all looked forward to for so long. The development of our technical skills was the primary focus in this rotation, and although it was challenging, my colleagues and I persevered with passion and dedication to the work we'd so lovingly chosen, and were looking ahead to a summer comprising a full-scope clinical residency, and in what seemed like a very distant future, graduation and becoming midwives.

A city of silence



As I finished looping a stitch into the forest green merino wool I gingerly worked with, a brief buzz to my right alerted me of an incoming text – “Patient on the floor positive for COVID-19 symptoms. I’m guessing we’ll hear from faculty soon.” And within twenty minutes, sure enough, we received an official email confirming that we would no longer be allowed to return to our intrapartum clinical setting for the foreseeable future. All academic courses would now be held online, and all in-person labs and simulations would be cancelled and rescheduled at a future, undetermined time. Suddenly, what had felt like a supported and progressing early labour came to a complete stop. We were all required to quarantine at home and within days the once-bustling and turbulent city fell quiet. The repetitive honking, yelling and buzzing from nearby traffic was replaced with silence, which was only broken by the blaring sirens of the ambulances continually picking up and dropping off thousands of the 1.6 million New Yorkers suffering from a range of COVID symptoms.



A collective mindset

Having been released from our clinical duty, many midwifery students find themselves in a strange limbo of emotions – disappointment that our education was so abruptly halted, understanding of the public health crisis our healthcare system suddenly faced, and helplessness because we could not stand by our clinical supervisors and aid our communities. We commenced efforts to assist in any way possible including mask sewing, meal deliveries and moral support via texts and letters to our frontline staff. As many of us have active nursing licenses, an effort has also been made to acquire positions in local hospitals both on COVID units and in maternity care, however, even these endeavours have been challenged by us not knowing when our academic studies would re-commence. As trained nurses, we have the collective mindset to act on behalf of our community and aid in the health and well-being of those in need. As midwifery students, we are in the process of learning to juxtapose this philosophy with one of reproductive and social justice, along with advocacy for equity and evidence-based practice. Therefore, we find ourselves in a unique position in the time of COVID: one where our commitment to practice and care for our community is unfulfilled, as well as one where the continuation of our development as advanced practice providers is suffering from the dissociative realities of online education for a profession where our abilities depend largely on tactile skills.

Dedication and commitment



This locality has brought about many questions for our future, both as students and midwives but also as citizens of the

United States because New York has quickly become a worldwide epicentre, and our hospital system and providers have appeared to drown in a never-ending sea of patients. To this date, over 16,000 New Yorkers have sadly passed away due to the coronavirus, and there have been over 280,000 confirmed cases. As dedicated healthcare professionals, I have no doubt in the stamina of my colleagues to venture forward and discover supportive and alternative ways to navigate this new path we've swiftly been transplanted onto. Although the United States' midwifery presence is limited, we are steadfast in our commitment to not only our patients but one another. As midwifery students, we begin the process of incorporating ourselves into this network, knitting ourselves into a community that is global.

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Outside my window the sky is dark, but the glittering lights of the city around me sparkle with hope. As the darkness of COVID continues to overwhelm our world, we persevere from home to assist frontline staff, calling upon our individual and group creativity to do what we can while maintaining eyes fixed to the light which will surely come. I have faith in midwives, I have faith in our community, and I believe in the good which drives us all towards the safety and wellness of people.



Here is the shawl I was knitting. I recently gave it to my grandmother for her birthday!

Category

1. Student Midwife Blog

Tags

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