

MS. HANNAH GRAFT BSN, RN

SUMMARY

Hannah Graft, a nurse fresh out of Bowling Green State University, talks with me about how being a nurse during a pandemic has affected her both physically and mentally and how the pandemic has impacted her patients as well. Her insight on the healthcare in America is important in understanding how our country is responding in a time of need. Throughout the conversation, she mentions the issues of politics, economic status, and fear on the survival of different groups of people during the coronavirus pandemic. Safety and survival are her key goals through these trying times as she continues to work on the frontlines.

INTERVIEW CONVERSATION

Josie: I am very glad I was able to get in contact with you and take some of your time today. I just wanted to ask a few questions in order to spark a conversation about the coronavirus pandemic and your job. As a nurse, you see tons of patients from different backgrounds going through the pandemic and suffering in different ways. I want to hear your input on how being a nurse in a pandemic has helped you and how the pandemic has affected the majority of your patients.

Hannah: I am happy to help! When the pandemic first began, I was working at Cincinnati Children's on the gastrointestinal floor. This means that a lot of my patients had chronic illnesses that made them severely immunocompromised. I had to not only look out for myself, but also be sure that I was taking the upmost caution inside and outside of work to protect the patients as well. I could be the single cause of one of them getting COVID-19 and passing because I wasn't being too careful. This not only puts a strain on me mentally, but physically as well. It's exhausting wearing multiple masks for 12 hours every day while trying to take care of myself.

Yet, I feel like this job has helped me in many ways. For one, I am the first to know of updates surrounding the treatments and care of coronavirus patients. This means I become more knowledgeable about the disease and I have seen it for myself. I was also one of the first groups of people to receive the COVID vaccine, which is a big step in slowing the spread of the virus and eventually ending the pandemic. So, while I am putting myself in danger by being on the frontlines, it also provides as a source of income, knowledge, and important medical resources to better survive the pandemic.

Josie: Speaking of masks, I've written a blog on one of my assignment pages about how different this pandemic could be with correct mass usage of masks. In your professional opinion, with no interference of personal or political input, do you feel that the pandemic could have been better controlled with less global deaths if everyone wore masks earlier and correctly?

Hannah: Absolutely. Without a doubt. A mask is not only to protect you, but the ones around you. It can protect you from those who are sick and the people around you if you happen to be going out in public sick. You know, everyone has their own personal opinion about masks, but at the end of the day it saves lives. I believe that if there is even a slight chance that I could protect someone—even one person—by wearing a mask, then it is completely worth the 12 hours and post-mask lines. Along those same lines, there are families out there who don't believe that the COVID pandemic is real. They don't see the patients like I do, they don't see their family members suffer, and they don't understand the severity of the situation in terms of global importance. They act like these weird cult groups that only rely on their own information. It's bizarre to me how some people can think that way because one person told them differently, but everyone is different, I guess.

Josie: That's very interesting. I want to talk a little bit about the fear associated with the pandemic. What are some fears that you experience now as a nurse and fears that your patients and their families experience now as well?

Hannah: I see a lot of low-income families come in that enter last minute when the disease is severely progressed because they didn't want to have to pay hospital bills or couldn't afford to keep making insurance payments. I have to treat everyone that walks in through those doors despite any Medicare or lack of payment. Their economic status put them at an extreme disadvantage that other families of higher economical status don't have to face. I've seen homeless people from Cincy to Cleveland come in and ask for help. Even when the stimulus checks came in, patients didn't want to use their food money or rent to pay for a visit to the hospital after they lost their jobs. They had this fear of losing everything because the virus had taken so much from them already. Some people are even scared to step foot in the hospital because they're scared that they'll contract the virus by going in to get medications or see a primary physician.

Personally, I am more fearful of infecting my loved ones from a job that I absolutely love. I am also not quite sure of the long-term side effects of the vaccine I received. I hope to have kids someday, so I hope that the rumors of infertility caused by the virus is not true. But, as a healthcare worker, I had to take my chance with science. It's part of my job. I have to trust that the healthcare teams are doing what they're supposed to and that we are doing everything in our power to keep the world healthy.

Josie: The last big thing I want to talk about before we wrap up is the affect of politics, specifically American politics, on the response and acts surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the books I've read in my UH4000 class, for example a book called American War, really hit on the idea that "every war is an American war" and the impact of a country's response to mass issues has on the people. I want to know what you think about the American response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Hannah: I have a lot of opinions on that, but I will try to keep it as PG as possible. The United States had no idea what to do when the pandemic first hit. This was the first warning sign that things were not going to go well for us. Our

president at that time seemed to be more worried about the functioning of the country's economy rather than the lives of the people. Politicians receive special treatment in the hospital if they contract COVID, like a private room or a reserved spot in overcrowded hospitals. Knowing someone higher up in the hospital allows them to receive care before others and sometimes even receive a higher level of care. That goes to show that who you know and what job you have can really help you in times like these.

Josie: Interesting how much politics can shape healthcare. I never thought about it in that much detail. Thank you so much for your time and your answers. I enjoyed hearing about your work and how your job has affected your "survival in our apocalypse."