

POSTER PRESENTATION

COVID 19- Uncharted Waters. Unknown Impact of the Storm. Who Will Navigate the Ship? Nurses of Course!

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Abstract

Background: Spring 2020 changed the focused for our hospitals, counties, state and nation. The realization, a virus was spreading rapidly across the world, had the potential to reach pandemic portions. Regional leaders convened to strategize the best approach to the impending crisis. One of the strategies was a COVID 19 Hotline. Two nursing directors were challenged to create a call center. Their objectives were to provide a hotline for the public where a live person would answer their calls and respond to their fear, confusion, lack of information, and lack of guidance around COVID 19. The hotline was established for an 18-county area, with accessibility seven days a week. The hotline was staffed by registered nurses, nursing students, retired nurses, and other health care professionals across the organization. **Methods:** Key staff were engaged from across the organization, from Telecommunications, Information Technology, Media Relations, and Human Resources to develop the infrastructure needed for a call center. Hospital staff were canvassed to seek interest in volunteering. Credible information through the CDC, local infection control experts, county resources was reviewed, compiled, distributed and updated continuously due to the evolving guidance. Resources for the general public were identified across the region including symptom identification, and management, when to seek medical care, mitigate transmission, quarantine explanation, emotional support for those experiencing anxiety, pregnancy and lactation questions, impact on pets, PPE donations, transportation needs to testing sites, and, testing for the homebound. Data was shared daily with the public health epidemiologists, Incident Command, county DOH's, CDC and the county executive. Numerous iterations of this hotline have occurred including COVID results notification and referral to infusion clinic. The hotline evolved into the COVID Hotline and Vaccination line when the host organization's role as a regional vaccine hub for NYS ensued. Staff provided information on vaccine sites, eligibility, adverse reactions, and referral to High-Risk Vaccine Clinic. **Results:** To date over 100,000 calls managed by the hotline staff. Included on staff are 19 dedicated RN staff many of whom were retired but interested in contributing during this crisis. Many callers did not realize the seriousness of their symptoms and the nurses had to, call 911, refer to mental health professionals, assist older adults register for a vaccine, obtain vaccine card replacements, reschedule vaccine appointments and provide efficacy and safety information. Other responsibilities included counseling patients on how to, avoid the spread of the virus, persistent positive results, negative result when symptomatic, and antibody infusion. Data on adverse vaccine reactions has been collected and reported to the CDC. **Conclusion:** By hiring nurses to work the hotline, the skill set allowed many callers to be managed at home and deferred from unnecessary emergency department utilization. This impacted the entire healthcare system and filled a critical need in the community. As nurses the staff had an ability to adapt to the changing tides and pivot successfully through these unprecedented stormy "seas".

Keywords: COVID 19, COVID 19 Hotline, Pandemic Resource, COVID 19 Vaccine, COVID 19 and Retired Nurses

References

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