

**Interviewee:** Lindsey Jo Boehm

**Interviewer:** Jared Verdon

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**Abstract:**

Lindsey Jo Boehm is a full-time student that attends the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire where she studies Nursing. Lindsey is a very busy student who balances work and school, and still finds time for spending time with her friends and family. In addition to a heavy school load, Lindsey works as a nurse's aide in a critical care unit at Mayo Clinic Hospital in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, as well as being a research assistant for a nursing professor at the University. In this interview, Lindsey illustrates how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected her employment, her relationship with her friends and family, her health, and her community. She provides meaningful insight as somebody who interacts with the healthcare field, and explains how the world can better prepare for a future viral outbreak.

**JV:** Alright, I think we're ready to go. So, first off, thank you very much to agreeing to be interviewed, that means a lot. I know you're going to have, I know that you have great insight on the pandemic, and that insight will be extremely useful in the future. And in terms of the, of the archive, and for people that will be viewing this in the future. So, also, since this will be public, if there are any questions that you don't want to answer, that's perfectly fine, we can move on from those questions. So, to state, the date is Tuesday, December 8, 2020, and it is 3:32 in the afternoon. And to provide some background context, the current total cases in the United States is 14 million, 14.8 million total cases, and unfortunately, 282,785 deaths. It's certainly been a hectic year, that's for sure. So, if I could have you state your name, and then maybe some demographic information like race, age, and gender?

**LJB:** Okay, my name is Lindsey Jo Boehm. And I would consider myself white. I'm 21 and a female.

**JV:** So, for the first question, what are the primary things you do on a day-to-day basis, so like, for example, your job, extracurricular activities, and so on?

**LJB:** I'm a full-time student at UWEC [University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire] for nursing, it's my last year. So, most of my day is spent on school. I also work as a nurse's aide in the critical care unit at Mayo hospital here in Eau Claire [Wisconsin]. I usually just work once a week. I don't have time for much more than that with school. And then I work as a research assistant for a nursing

professor. So that's how I spend most of my time, and when I can I spend time with my roommates, and occasionally my family, but obviously, that's been changed with the pandemic. And I do like to run when I can. That's about it.

**JV:** Awesome. So, when you first learned about COVID-19, what were your initial thoughts about it? How, and then maybe, also, how have your thoughts changed since then?

**LJB:** Um, well, to be honest, when I first learned about it was when it was still in Europe. And I was honestly pretty unconcerned. Which was ignorant of me. I just like, I, I thought it probably won't get over here eventually. But I didn't think it would spread as fast as it did. And I didn't think things would get as bad as it did, like, from what I was hearing, it was mostly just affecting old people. And it was kind of like the flu. So, I was ignorant to how bad things would get. And obviously, my opinion has changed since it hit Wisconsin this fall. And I'm, like seeing the effects in the critical care unit I work in. And in my own family. I definitely take a lot more seriously now.

**JV:** Yeah, I think we all have had a similar outlook on it, we kind of all were ignorant of it. So, you're not the only one, no problem there. Um, in terms of your employment, or again, like you said, some of the extracurricular activities you do, how has COVID-19 affected maybe your, your job, or also maybe go into depth on that documenting the, Documenting the Undocumented project? How has it affected that?

**LJB:** Yeah, so when COVID-19 first hit the United States, it didn't really hit Wisconsin. It was like mostly on the coasts in New York and California back in March. So, when that happened to the hospital, I work at, they kind of reacted prematurely and shut down all, like, anything they could, all elective procedures and appointments. So, I actually got laid off. Even though I work in a, I work in a critical care unit, so I thought I'd have some job security. But I got laid off, a lot of my friends got fired. So, I'm thankful that I kept my job. But for the first few months, like every time I was supposed to work a shift, they just call me and say you don't have to come in. So that was tough financially. And then I had a full-time internship lined up for the summer, a nursing internship, and they're very competitive in this area, so I spent, like, my whole junior year, working towards that internship and interviewing. And I got it and I was really excited for it, because I would have rotated through like 11 different units in the hospital. And they cancelled it like a month before. So, when they did that, I asked my job, as an aide if I could, if I could work like part or full time for the summer, and they said no. So, it really threw off my employment plans for the summer because I thought I'd have like a full-time paid job that paid a bit better than my CNA job. That didn't pan out. Um, eventually, when things picked back up again, when the hospital realized they really didn't need to be shut down completely, I started working my normal hours again, and I picked up as much as I could in the summer. And then outside of work, I have a clinical, where we go out to rural dairy farms and provide immunizations and other things for migrant farmworkers. A lot of them are from Mexico, specifically, a lot of them speak primarily Spanish, some of them are undocumented. And I'm the only group in my cohort who actually got to go to our clinicals. So, I'm really thankful for that, because we got to be hands on and working with patients. But, we definitely had to make

a lot of adjustments to be able to go on with clinical. Like we had to screen people at the door, take their temperature. And then we had to really prioritize what we were going to do because we didn't want to spend too much time in close contact with our patients. So that's how it's affected kind of my two main things, work and school. We're all online right now for all my lecture classes. I do like lead one class, I'm a mentor for the honors program, so for that we have been going in person, which has actually been really nice to just get on campus one day a week. But other than that, all my courses are online. Work is really busy now, like Wisconsin is really being hit hard. Now the way that the coasts were hit back in March, it finally caught up to Wisconsin. So, my days at work are really crazy and really long, but I'm thankful that I can clock out and go back to my normal day to day as a, as a student because I can't imagine working full time in critical care unit right now. It would be exhausting.

**JV:** That, I mean, obviously has a huge effect on your employment. That's awesome that that, that, that project I found very interesting. Professor Frei mentioned it briefly, so that's fascinating to, to hear about. Awesome. So maybe I'm going to switch towards the family and household maybe. How has COVID-19 affected you and you, you and your family's day to day activities?

**LJB:** So, the family I live with is my roommates and it affected us because as soon as it hit we quarantined fairly strictly, we don't go to bars, we don't go to restaurants, we still go to the grocery store. We, there's like one house of friends that we see and interact with, but it really affected us socially. And we all just turned 21, so I like got to go out to the bars for my 21<sup>st</sup>, and I haven't been out since. And then my family by blood who lives here in Eau Claire [Wisconsin]. It affected us because my grandparents who were living independently in an apartment both got it. And my grandpa wound up in the critical care unit that I work at. And my grandma wound up in a different hospital. And my aunt got it in the process. So, what's really affected our day to day lives is the fact that because of this virus, which is like a hyper coagulating virus, my grandma's got clots in his kidneys and he's now on dialysis for the rest of his life, so we had to move my grandparents into a nursing home. Once they could be discharged, my grandma was discharged on hospice. So, we had to move them into a nursing home. And we have to take my grandpa to dialysis three times a week. But other than that, we can't see them because nursing homes aren't allowing visitors right now. So, I haven't seen my, we used to have dinner with my grandparents every Thursday. And I haven't, I wasn't going because I've been working in a hospital. So, I, I wasn't going and exposing myself to them. But yeah, so that's really changed our day to day lives. Because now we're like providing transportation for my grandpa, and we haven't seen my grandma since this all started. So yeah.

**JV:** Yeah, that's, that's really too bad. I'm sorry about that.

**LJB:** It's okay, I am thankful that everyone lived, and everyone pulled through. So.

**JV:** Right, that's, all you can do, unfortunately.

**LJB:** Yeah.

**JV:** What have been, what have been the biggest challenges that you have faced during this pandemic? What has been the, what has been the hardest, I guess, aspect, or maybe change in lifestyle that this pandemic has presented unfortunately?

**LJB:** I would say it like, for me, the hardest thing has been like frustration with those around me. Not like those in my immediacy, like my roommates and things, but just like, with my community, because it's just like, I'm someone who, you know, looks for the best in people and thinks the best of people. But it's been very frustrating to, like, put in a 12 hour shift in the critical care unit, seeing patients die alone, taking them to the morgue, and then like, on my way home, see house parties going on or see on my social media, people having house parties, or getting together and going to weddings or funerals, or stopping at the grocery store and seeing people without masks like it has just been so frustrating, especially now that there's that like, personal component where my own grandpa ended up in a critical care unit. So, I think that's the hardest part for me, it's just feeling constantly kind of angry and frustrated. Yeah.

**JV:** Yeah. I, I agree 100 percent. I mean, you have obviously an even more in-depth view than I do working in the ICU and stuff like that. It's, yeah, it's, it's crazy. That's for sure. Um, I guess my next question is, how has this, how has the COVID-19 outbreak affected your community, community members, maybe that you're in contact with? How has it maybe changed their day-to-day lifestyle.?

**LJB:** I'm part of the college community. And it's changed a lot of people's day to days because most of our courses are online now, so we're not going to campus. And then people are being quarantined. So, they're stuck at home. And I know, for example, like those who are living on campus, if they get quarantined, they move them to a different dorm and deliver their meals and things. So yeah, I would say like isolation is the biggest way it's affected my community, especially when you have like older adults who are being isolated at home, somebody needs to get their groceries and things like that. We've offered that for some of our older neighbors and things but yeah, probably just the isolation is the biggest thing. Especially this summer, like usually, Eau Claire [Wisconsin], is such a vibrant community. We have like music in the park, the Eau Claire [Wisconsin] marathon was cancelled, like, all those things that make Eau Claire [Wisconsin] such like a vibrant city with the arts especially were all canceled, so.

**JV:** Yeah, it's, it really, really has greatly affected our community, that's for sure. You kind of touched on how people have been, around you, have been responding. But how do you think, how do you think people are responding currently to the, and maybe in the past, the past few months, to the COVID-19 pandemic?

**LJB:** People, people in general or people around me?

**JV:** Let's do people around you. And then we,

**LJB:** Okay.

**JV:** If you want to touch on both of them that's fine, too. But let's,

**LJB:** Sure. Yeah, yeah. Well, um, I think that the issue has like the virus has been really divisive. So, it kind of seems like there's kind of two camps, like the camps who will, you know, the people who believe in the virus wear their masks, social distance, for the most part. And then there's people who say the virus is a hoax, that the vaccine is going to be poisonous, like things like that; they don't believe in masks. So, it's really been divisive. And I'm grateful that like, most of the people I surround myself with, have been in the same mindset as myself, which is like, we need to take this seriously. You know, I mean, we've gotten takeout from restaurants, we've seen friends outside, things like that, like, I'm not going to say we've been perfect, but we've taken it pretty seriously. We're not going out to the bars. That goes for four of my five roommates. And then my family has always been on the same page. Like I do go to my parents now on them. But we wear our masks and for as long as we could when it was nice that we would sit outside in the screen porch and spread out when we eat and things like that. And my extended family is kind of the same mindset, we canceled Thanksgiving, and there were no fights about that. I did have one roommate, she was a sub leaser who, she was a sob leaser, she's young, she's 20. And she just like, wouldn't stop going to bars and house parties. We all sat her down when she first moved in and just kind of laid out our concerns. You know, I work in the hospital and other one of my roommates works in the hospital, another one of my roommates works at a daycare with kids who can't wear masks, you know, kids under three. And so, we just kind of explained our concerns. And asked like, you know, bare minimum, please don't go to bars and house parties. And she said she's going to live her life and she's not going to base your life around us. And so, it caused a lot of problems in the house, and thankfully, she finally just moved out, which led to us absorbing her portion of the rent, which is too bad because we already pay way too much for this place. So, we're all paying more in rent now. But honestly, to us, it was worth it to like, feel safe in our own homes.

**JV:** Yeah, for sure.

**LJB:** So, yeah.

**JV:** Yeah, that seems like a very tough situation.

**LJB:** Yeah, it's like, it was tough when like my grandpa was in the critical care unit and she still wouldn't stop going to the bars. And she really wouldn't budge or compromise in any way. We really tried to, like find a happy medium, and she wasn't having it. She would invite people over and not have them wear masks, constantly going to house parties and lying about it, but then like we would see it on her Snapchat and stuff. So, I'm glad, I'm glad she was able to find a better living situation because that wasn't good for any of us.

**JV:** Yeah, for sure. That, that seems rough. I'm sorry.

**LJB:** Yeah.

**JV:** I guess my next question is, in what ways, in what ways do you think that the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting people's mental, mental health or even their physical health? You obviously have a lot of expertise in that field. Where do you, what do you think, how do you think this is affecting people's mental and physical health?

**LJB:** I think it's absolutely taken a toll on people's mental health. I mean, the, just the isolation that people are feeling alone, because, because like we're trying to keep our social circles small has been really hard. But when you add to that, like, fear and anxiety of the unknown, and then family members who are sick or dying, um, yeah, I think it's been a lot of isolation, a lot of anxiety, like waiting for the hammer to fall like, I know, I felt that way and my roommates have felt that way, worrying about parents and grandparents. So, I think it has had a negative impact on people's mental health overall. I will say I think some people have found a better work life balance during this time, like working from home for some people has been really nice and has allowed more family time. So, I always look at the bright side of things. So that's like one positive thing I could say. And then physical health wise, I think the virus is taking the greatest toll but also things that are being put off because of the virus, primary care visits, elective surgeries, people who are not wanting to come into the hospital even though maybe they have a heart attack symptom or stroke symptom, and they're delaying care. I think that delay of care, we will be able to see looking back is going to be, like, it's going to cause worse health outcomes. So.

**JV:** Right, awesome. Yeah. Great response. How do you think, how have municipal leaders or government officials in your community, how do you think they responded to the outbreak? From the start, and maybe how that's changed over time?

**LJB:** Yeah. Well, I think that the, the Director of Public Health for Eau Claire [Wisconsin] county has done a really good job. I do know, in other counties, public health has put out directives such as a stay-at-home order or a masked mandate. And sheriff's offices have come out and said they're not going to enforce it. So that's been tricky and unfortunate. Especially for myself having public health knowledge, and I'm a little biased because I'm in the nursing field, it is frustrating to see people not taking the advice of nursing, and doctors and scientists. But here in Eau Claire [Wisconsin], I think everyone's done a really great job. And then here in Wisconsin, we have a mask, a mask mandate from Evers. I will say like the bar and tavern league really runs the city in the state more than I think we knew. And so, bars and taverns have continued to stay open, which I don't think is the best move, but it's just showing us like how much power the bar and tavern league has. A lot of other states either shut bars down for a while, or like, made a curfew around bars, so they have to stop selling alcohol at nine or 10 or something. But not here in Wisconsin or in Eau Claire [Wisconsin].

**JV:** Yeah, it really, it does show like, it shows how much we rely on those things. For sure.

**LJB:** Yeah.

**JV:** Let's see here. [\_\_\_\_\_] Um, you kind of mentioned, you kind of mentioned people that, you know, that have gotten sick. Family members, are there any, any friends outside of the family

members you mentioned prior that have gotten sick, that have, that have come, come in contact with COVID-19?

**LJB:** Yeah, so a good friend of mine, Mariah, got it a few months back. And she was, she got it at work. She was working in a restaurant. And so, she, and she was also essentially kind of homeless at the time, she was couch surfing. So, she had to stay in a motel for two weeks. But she really made the best of it. She got outside like a really independent, strong woman. So, her only symptom was shortness of breath. And she pulled through and she's all good. And then I mentioned that we have like a house of friends that we see. And they've had, I think, like, four out of five of them have gotten it at some point, one of them works in a bar. So that was kind of inevitable, I think, so a lot of them have had it but they've had like really minimal symptoms, but they just were stuck in quarantine for most of the summer. From, from my Bible study, got it but had minimal symptoms. Most, most young people I know haven't gotten super sick from it, haven't gotten critically sick from it.

**JV:** Awesome. Kind of backtrack a little bit, when the, when the first stay at home mandate was announced, what were your initial thoughts and reactions to that?

**LJB:** When the first stay at home man date was announced, I think probably at the end of March, maybe?

**JV:** Yeah, I think that's around when it was.

**LJB:** I was doing a good job staying positive because I didn't realize just how long we would be in quarantine. So, like my roommates and I, we made like a quarantine bucket list, we watched shows together, we worked out at home together, I had more time to like, cook and run, like take care of myself. So, actually at the beginning, it really wasn't too bad. Yeah, maybe like the first month, I actually liked having the extra time just because my lifestyle has been so crazy with being a student. And when this first started, I had three jobs. And then I was down to one. So yeah, the first month wasn't bad.

**JV:** Right. Alright, I think the last few questions, I think I'm going to focus more on the future. Actually, no I'm going to backtrack before I get there. In terms of the information, maybe how you're getting your information, where you're getting it from, what have been your, your primary sources of news during the pandemic?

**LJB:** So, news channels right now are like pretty divisive. A lot of people have like only one channel that their watch. I, I usually like MSNBC, and I usually steer clear of Fox just personally. Other than that, I don't watch the local news. I guess if I want numbers and things I always go to the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] because I trust them. But I guess news has been kind of word of mouth, some social media stuff, seeing stuff on Facebook. And then like, I follow the Eau Claire [Wisconsin] Public Health Department on Facebook. So that's how I see news about like the county specifically. And I hear things from my parents too.

**JV:** Right. Yeah, it's, it's definitely divisive amongst big cable news networks, that's for sure. But I, it feels like it's been that way for a while.

**LJB:** Right.

**JV:** Yeah, so let's look towards the future. How do you, how has your personal experience with this pandemic, maybe, how has it shaped your outlook on how we go about our day to day lives, even after, you know, hopefully, when this is all, all said and done, how has, how do you think your outlook on day-to-day activities is going to change because of the pandemic?

**LJB:** Well, I think, firstly, the pandemic has made me more grateful for things that we took for granted before the pandemic, like time with family and extended friends, or friends and extended family and travel. It's made me more grateful for those things. And then, so I think I just cherished my time with people a lot more. And then I think like, it's, it's helped me learn to kind of live in the present a little more, because I think before the pandemic hit, I was, like, everything I was doing was to plan for the future. So, like, getting that internship and things like that. Like I was, I was just so future focused. And now since the pandemic happened, like, it's really kind of been like week by week, especially when things have happened like my grandparents getting sick or something like that. I think I just live in the present moment a little bit more because the future is so uncertain. And like, you can think you have everything figured out, you can think you have that big nursing internship figured out but it can get pulled out from under you so quickly. So yeah, probably live in the present a little more and I'm definitely like, more grateful for time with loved ones.

**JV:** Yeah, for sure. That's, that's words we can all live by for sure. I mean, obviously you're up close with, you know, people in critical condition at times. Knowing what you know now what do you think it individuals, communities, even the government at different levels, what do they need to keep in mind for the future? You know, in particular, if there's going to be another outbreak of another virus that we don't know anything about, what do you think people need to keep in mind the next time that this could happen?

**LJB:** Yeah. I think people need to be a little bit more compassionate and empathetic to those around them because I think a lot of people feel like, oh, I'm young, or I don't have preexisting health condition, so I can do what I want. But they need to understand that it affects their entire community. And I think, like, from my perspective, because Wisconsin was one of the last states to get hit, we were being so careful for so many months. And then we started to relax and we started to get fatigued. And that's one the, the pandemic really hit. So, I think we need to remember, like, if it looks like your efforts are working, if it looks like staying home is working to just follow through, even when it gets long. Because like, I think we were being so, so cautious in the first few months. And it was working like Eau Claire [Wisconsin] had like no cases for the longest time. And then, at the same time, as it finally hit, Wisconsin, we were all getting tired and, and making exceptions and going to bars and going to weddings and things. So, I think we need to avoid that like burnout and fatigue if there's another, if there's another



wave or an or a new pandemic. I guess there will be more waves of this pandemic. It's like the flu it mutates. So.

**JV:** Yeah, yeah, for sure. It does seem that, we did well for so long, and then it was just this, oh, no, it's, it's, I've had enough. Let's go about everyday life.

**LJB:** Yeah, yeah, people got tired of like doing the right thing, which is fair, like it was hard. It is hard to quarantine. It's hard. It's boring. It's long. It's hard on your mental health, like we talked about, and people just got fatigued, and let their guard up. And now we have like, no critical care beds in the whole state of Wisconsin. So.

**JV:** Right. My last concluding question. Let's see. To kind of, I, I missed one here to kind of backtrack.

**LJB:** Okay.

**JV:** Unfortunately, we have that nice concluding future, look towards the future optimistic, you know, question. And now I have to go back. Has, did COVID-19 change, I know you kind of touched on it, but maybe this, to zero in on it, did it change your, your relationship with your family and your friends and the community, and then in kind of, in what ways did it do that?

**LJB:** Yeah, so, COVID-19 changed my relationship with my family because I was separated from my grandparents for a long time. I wasn't seeing them because I didn't want to risk giving them the virus. So that was tough for me, because I used to see them at least once a week for Thursday night dinners. And now they're in a nursing home so we can't see them at all. Although my grandpa has to go to dialysis three times a week, so like, if I'm the one who gives him a ride to dialysis, I see him then. And, yeah, I just haven't, like seen my parents as much. Or my extended family. I mean, I haven't seen my extended family at all. And with friends, I think it's made me closer with my roommates. But it's unfortunately probably made me less close with friends I don't live with because I can't see them, or I'm not supposed to see them. So, you know, I have a good friend who lives in Marshfield [Wisconsin], some good friends who live in the cities and I haven't seen them since summer. Because in the summer, at least we can all hang out outside of the beach or something. So, it's made my circle smaller and closer, I guess overall.

**JV:** Yeah. Awesome. Well, that's all the questions I got for you. Again, to reiterate, thank you so much for the, for the time, you're obviously very busy. I really appreciate the time to be interviewed. It's a very, it's a really cool project. You know, I'm excited to see other perspectives from other individuals on how the pandemic has affected them. So, I will, when this is all said and done, I will hopefully remember to send you a link to where it's going to be archived. And if not, you could also contact Dr. Frei, if for some reason I screw up, but I'll try to send you a link to where it's going to be archived. So yeah, so thank you very much for, for the, for the time.

**LJB:** Yeah, thank you for yours. Good luck, good luck this week and next week.

**JV:** You as well, you as well. Thank you.

**LJB:** Thanks.