

Hannah Heddaoui  
02/20/2022  
Health Humanities  
Covid Primary Source

### **A Side of Covid Unnoticed: Working with those with Alzheimer's Diseases**

It is June 2020. Covid, still very much real, is settling down to an extent. De Pere, Wisconsin is no longer on lockdown, and businesses are slowly beginning to open up. I'm excited: hopeful, even. I accept my first ever certified nursing assistant job. It is at an assisted living specializing in dementia and Alzheimer's disease. It is the first time where I am doing a job that will influence my future career and goals immensely. I am about to be a healthcare worker in midst of a pandemic. I am ecstatic to embark on this new journey in hopes of it getting me to my end goal by the experiences I am about to endure. What seemed like it was going to be a smooth, taking care of our elderly, happy-go-lucky summer, turned out to be very different.

Two years later, two years into a pandemic, and two years working as a healthcare worker, I have learned a lot, as we all have. Although there has been difficulty, I am very grateful to have spent these years in the pandemic to grasp a quality understanding of being a healthcare worker for the elderly. I also extended my knowledge on dementia and Alzheimer's disease which previously I did not know much about. Personally, before working with patients suffering from this disease, I had never experienced someone close to me struggle with it; it was a brand-new territory. This disease is something so unlike anything else. It is emotionally damaging to all parties who endure the journey with those diagnosed.

Imagine. We are in a full-fledged pandemic. People are losing their lives each and every day from a new virus. Many families bond together, as there is nowhere to go other than the home; most of the family, at least... Isolated and confused, parents, grandparents, guardians,

Hannah Heddaoui  
02/20/2022  
Health Humanities  
Covid Primary Source

who could no longer care for themselves, are held trapped in nursing establishments with no in person contact to their family members. A very confusing time, to say the very least.

As I mentioned previously, my job was to care for those in an assisted living who were living with dementia or Alzheimer's. I want to be a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves necessarily, to the world. There is a specific instance when I was working that sticks out in my mind so prominently. It was a moment I realized that this pandemic was so much scarier for my residents, deep down, than any of us.

This past summer, I was with a resident in her bathroom, assisting her. She stares at me with doe eyes. I am covered head to toe in P.P.E: gown, glasses, gloves, mask, face shield. "Is there something wrong with me why are you wearing all of that?" she asks those eyes saddening as the moment goes by. At this moment, I was really taken back. Of course I knew how Alzheimer's worked, however, this was the first time I really thought about how terrifying this whole change from the pandemic must be for them. We are surrounded every day of this pandemic with Covid news on every platform imaginable. Something that was so common and natural for us to hear and know about, was something that some of my residents had not a clue about.

To put this in perspective, for me, was honestly just so shocking to think about. Our entire life has been affected by Covid. Everything. Yet, for some of my residents, it is a very confusing time. Though I cannot understand fully how they interpret what is going on, I know to extent that some of them really have no idea what exactly is going on. So just to think about how frightening it would be to think that your family members haven't visited you, or why

Hannah Heddaoui  
02/20/2022  
Health Humanities  
Covid Primary Source

these people are dressed in full protection wear just to help you with your everyday living? It is a concept that I do not think is addressed enough and that society really hasn't thought about period.

With the hardships Covid has brought to caregiving in healthcare, I immediately thought to the poem *An American Nurse Foresees Her Death*. I resonated with one particular quote from it, "when the shift ends, if it ever ends" (*An American Nurse Foresees Her Death*, 2020). I comprehend this quote in two different ways. The first way is the fact of how understaffed healthcare workers have been during this entire pandemic (especially hospital staff in the very beginning). I have not heard of one health establishment that hasn't struggled. It has been exhausting for those dealing with the short-staffing Covid has presented. A second understanding of the passage was the guilt and weight that someone carries after they go home. Death, for one, is never an easy thing to see, but we also have to endure the pain our patients/ residents and families are going through.

I am unfortunately not artist, however, I wanted to express my project with something visual. When working with people who have dementia/ Alzheimer's, words alone are sometimes very challenging. Therefore, I thought that writing something up would be a poor representation of the community I am trying to represent. So, I decided to use a scrub top because that is the prime uniform that healthcare workers wear each and every day. A scrub top is worn in place of normal clothing, but it is normal for the patient/resident to see you in, therefore, it is a normality for the whole facility. I emphasized in the middle of the top to recognize Alzheimer's awareness. I chose to put this in the middle because I wanted to bring

Hannah Heddaoui  
02/20/2022  
Health Humanities  
Covid Primary Source

attention to this ongoing disease that affects nearly six million American's. I then wanted to use words associated with the disease, feelings, conditions, and vocabulary, that are most likely heightened during this confusing time for them. Although this scrub top is something that holds simplicity overall, there is a deeper message that is portrayed across it.

Alzheimer's disease, unfortunately, is not going anywhere. It is something that needs to be reminded about and talked about. This is why I believe that it is an extremely important subject to be talked about during this time of the pandemic. I want to be a voice for those who cannot necessarily speak through their emotions. There of course is many primary sources of our point in view in healthcare, but I have not seen really anything about those who struggle with this disease. My piece in this archive is a different side of healthcare that I think will be useful in the future for people who read this. Depending on the length of time this is circulated back to someone who reads this, maybe we will live in a different world where this disease is cured: an exhilarated feeling is to believe there is hope for the future of Alzheimer's.

Hannah Heddaoui  
02/20/2022  
Health Humanities  
Covid Primary Source

