

A co-worker's message - Please take COVID-19 seriously!

January 11, 2021

This is Carolyn Downes, Secretary in the Building Permit Office - I would like to share with you what I recently experienced with testing positive with Covid-19 after an 8 day stay at Bayhealth-Kent. I am sharing this not for sympathy but for understanding to all of you that Covid-19 should be taken very seriously and is very real. Most think it won't happen to them and trust me I pray it never does.

I tested for Covid-19 on December 8th, after exposure from a positive co-worker. That night I had chills but no fever and I thought I got chilled standing outside at the Camden-Wyo FH site waiting to get tested. The results came back positive on December 10th for both me and my husband. Up until then, I only experienced a slight headache and sinus like cough/symptoms. That night my husband had chills and fever. My symptoms went from lo-grade fever, dry cough, chills, diarrhea, weakness, loss of taste and the very next day loss of smell. A covid-nurse friend checked us out and advised to contact our primary doctor and to request a Z-pak and steroid asap. She advised I go to the ER just to get checked out as I am diabetic and had chemo 6 years ago. But my stubborn self...thought I would be ok and it was a virus like the regular flu. I thought it had to run its course and I would be ok. My doctor ordered an x-ray which showed fluid and requested a CT scan. MDI said a CT scan could only be done after I tested negative for Covid, so they scheduled it for after the New Year on Jan. 4, 2021! (Our Covid nurse friend was advising to have it done asap!)

In the meantime, on December 17th my oxygen had dropped clear down to 60 and I called 911 that night, as I just didn't feel right. I felt light headed and my oxygen had stayed 60 all day. The Covid had attacked my oxygen and given me Covid pneumonia. They could not understand that I was able to carry on a conversation and did not have chest pains. But the ER personnel said that was the Covid. The Doctor at the ER after doing a chest x-ray and CT scan and labs told me the prognosis and that I was more serious than I knew and that they had to get me to ICU asap for possible intubation. I asked if there was anything that I could do to prevent that and she pointed to the heavens and said it's in the Good Lord's hands as we are in uncharted waters. I asked how long I would need to be intubated and she responded 3-6 weeks and that I may not come out of it as it all depended on how my body reacted to it. I told her I was a believer and asked her to please pray for me and she did...right on the spot! They literally ran with me on the stretcher to the ICU and I prayed like never before and anyone that entered my room that I felt was a believer I had pray with me. The second night in the ICU at 2:30 am this oxygen therapist entered my room and said he wasn't sure why he was there as this was not his normal floor but he was helping out a friend and I said you are here because I prayed for you and he admitted to me that he was a believer and from Delmarva Teen Challenge and he put a new rubber glove on and prayed with me on the spot and told me to take deep breaths like I meant it and to sit up straight and keep a pillow in my back when not on my stomach.

Once in the ICU I was hooked up to 6 IV antibiotics and IV steroid and a host of other concoctions. Not to mention 2 oxygen masks so loud that I felt my head was gonna bust as it sounded right in my ear. The Dr. said she would know within the first 15 minutes to half hour of when they put me on my stomach if my oxygen would increase. Thank God it worked! I then had to pray that it stayed increased and did not decrease. Every time the low oxygen alarm went off I was so scared and prayed I didn't have to be intubated. I was on a liquid diet while in ICU in case I had to be intubated. The fear in my sons' voices and my husband's I will never forget. While in ICU my husband called to check on me to the nurse and she said he sounded choked up and asked if I was ok with her convincing him to come to the ER to get checked out. Luckily he didn't need to be admitted. His oxygen stayed in the 90's. Not to gross anyone out, but I also had the yellow Covid diarrhea and kept asking for Imodium until the Doctor told me it was the Covid and they wanted it to release from my body. I even had the yellow discharge from my mouth. My mouth was so dry and I ended up with thrush in my mouth. The nurses said that some patients have the yellow discharge from their eyes.

After a few days in the ICU I was then released down to the PCU (Progressive Care Unit) where they continued to monitor and decrease my oxygen, take labs daily, until I was able to be discharged on Christmas Day late afternoon. I received excellent care while at BayHealth in the ER, ICU and Covid PCU floor. The doctors would spend time explaining and the nurses, CNA's, lab techs, respiratory therapist, housekeeping and dietary even put flowers on my meals to help brighten my days!

I am so Blessed and appreciative of ALL my co-workers' (work family) prayers, texts, cards, calls, stuffed animals (that I had to fight the nurses over as they loved on them every time they entered my room), flowers, plants, food to my husband, adult color book and farm book, magazines, and other gifts. Things were being dropped off to the front desk left and right and I appreciate each and every one of you! There is nothing like having a praying friend/work family! I came home with 3 liters of oxygen when resting and 6 liters when moving around the house (hopefully temporarily) but I am just happy and blessed to be Alive and Here!

Please take this Covid-19 seriously and don't take life for granted. The Doctors told me to please avoid any contact possible and do the grocery pickup/curbside pickup wherever you can. Do the drive thru whenever available. He told me to stay out of restaurants, grocery stores, drug stores, churches, and any where there is a crowd. Please stay safe as within a blink of an eye your life as you know it can all change.

-Carolyn Downes