

Background

- The COVID-19 pandemic has created a global health crisis.
- Novel and intolerable pressures have been placed upon nurses affecting their capacity to provide care.
- Clinical empathy allows practitioners an increased capacity to understand a patient's experience, and promotes higher practitioner morale, safer care, and patient satisfaction.
- The pandemic has challenged frontline workers in their delivery of patient family centered care due to increased workload demands, staffing shortages, and severity of the COVID-19 illness

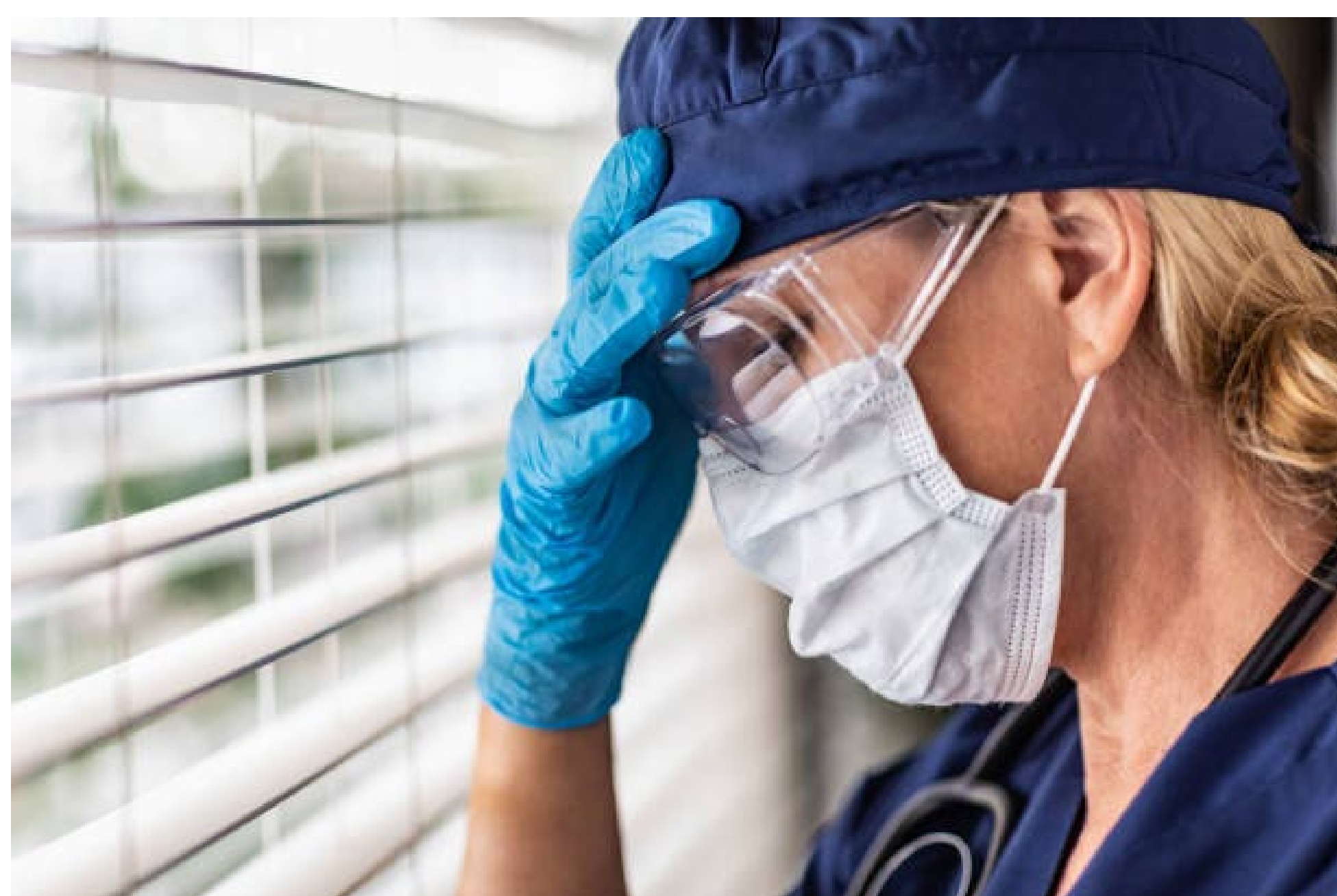
Objective

The aim of this exploratory study was to determine:

- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on nursing care delivery
- The empathetic response of nurses to their patients and family members
- Perceived administrative support during the pandemic by nurses
- The emotional and physical well-being of the nurses.

Methods

- An Interview template was developed with guiding questions and included:
 - Work experience pre-pandemic and during the pandemic
 - Changes in practice, responsiveness to patient needs and interactions
 - Nurse perceptions about changes in care delivery and patient interactions
 - Ability to feel empathetic toward patients and families
 - Perceived support from leadership
 - Coping strategies used for self-care during the pandemic
- Bedside Nurses (*N*=2) and Nurse Practitioners (*N*=2) caring for COVID-19 patients were interviewed
- Recorded interviews were analyzed independently by all collaborators to identify common themes from the interviews.
- Collaborators subsequently reached consensus of identified themes through discussion.



Themes	Opportunities for Nurse Clinicians	Opportunities for Nursing Leadership
Role changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek out mentors/senior staff/peers for support• Maintain a sense of flexibility and adaptability• Engage with nurse educators on new skills and knowledge• Embrace opportunity to enhance individual nursing practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide personal support and understanding of role changes• Stay connected to redeployed staff to maintain support and consistency
Increased workload	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be open to innovative staffing models• Use self-care strategies to recharge between shifts• Provide constructive feedback to managers about working conditions• Connect with peers so you do not feel alone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create innovative staffing patterns to meet increased demand• Avoid downsizing and staffing ratio changes in times of stress• Educate staff about unfamiliar technologies• Develop algorithms of care interventions
More mechanical and less personalized nursing care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create and maintain professional boundaries• Provide individualized meaningful and personal care to patients in short bursts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop innovative strategies for Patient and Family Centered Care delivery
Communication challenges with patients and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborate with patients to provide best methods of communication• Be open to use of technology in unique ways• Do not take patient frustrations personally	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Streamline innovative communication strategies• Utilize daily huddles
Emotional and physical fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain hope and optimism• Engage in self-care activities before, during and after work• Maintain proper sleep schedule• Recognize and attend to personal, physical and emotional cues to provide added self-care interventions• Engage in physical activity and hobbies in off hours that distract the mind from work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish personal connection with staff to convey understanding of situation• Provide support for periods of respite• Offer self-care and other supportive resources.
Perceived lack of administrative support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek out leaders to engage in problem-solving strategies related to providing needed support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frequent communication with staff to convey understanding• Take action to address needs and unit culture
Deficits in Palliative Care Knowledge and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek resources to gain education about palliative and end of life care strategies• Learn principles of primary palliative care and practice them to support patients at EOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide education and resources to front-line staff regarding relevant domains of palliative care

Results

Emerging themes from the interviews:

- ❖ Role changes
- ❖ Increased workload
- ❖ Depersonalized and mechanical care delivery
- ❖ Communication challenges with patient and family members
- ❖ Physical and emotional exhaustion
- ❖ Perceived poor administrative support
- ❖ Deficits in palliative care education

Future Application and Next Steps

Clinical leaders and nursing staff have opportunities to engage in supportive endeavors which can:

- Restore focus and regain positive perceptions by nurses
- Strengthen coping skills and build resilience in nurses
- Impact delivery of compassionate and empathetic care to patients.

Next steps include implementing a larger qualitative study to understand the emergent themes and impact on the new graduate nurse and/or nurse practitioner transition to their professional roles

Lessons Learned

- This study demonstrates that front-line nurses have been immensely challenged, emotionally and physically during the pandemic
- It is important for nurses to utilize self-care strategies in order to promote self-compassion and resilience
- It is imperative that health care systems and nursing leadership understand how the pandemic has affected their nursing staff, and assist them in obtaining needed resources



Acknowledgments

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