

Good afternoon everyone,

Thank you all for taking the time to be here today. We feel privileged to be heard by all of you, and we are grateful for the opportunity to deliver our message.

We are a group of healthcare professionals that work at a hospital here in Edmonton. We are frontline staff, providing direct patient care in the ICUs, wards, and throughout the hospital. We stand with you, as some of us have been doing for some time now. We want to share our story about what is happening at our hospital.

Back in February, nearly one year ago, we were told we were entering what would be a worldwide medical pandemic, the likes no one in our lifetime had seen. There would be patients coming in droves, ICUs would be overflowing, they would put patients in hallways and cafeterias. We were told to prepare for the worst. We wouldn't be allowed to see our families if we were stationed on COVID units. We were asked to recruit all and any relief staff, friends, retirees, extra bodies were needed in every department. Everyone was afraid and no one knew what to expect. Management told us the "wave" of patients would hit the hospital at any moment. We cancelled surgeries, blocked beds, discharged patients early and revoked access to many necessary services. Our managers and the higher ups again told us "the wave is coming". It never came. They said "the wave is coming in March. We are expecting 500 COVID admissions". March came and went. The patients did not. They told us they would have exact dates predicted for when we would be getting this "wave". The hospitals sat empty. They scared us by telling us we would run out of PPE. We had to lock up our masks, gloves and hand sanitizer as staff were stealing supplies out of fear. The wave never came. April and May passed by, still no patients. The staff had

so much time on their hands, they were able to choreograph and film dances, paid for by your tax dollars. Massive amounts of resources, manpower and finances were wasted preparing for the wave of patients that never came. You may be interested to know that they actually pay people full salary to watch other staff remove their PPE. They are paying University-educated, highly skilled workers top dollar to literally watch others undress... so much for the healthcare budget. We all looked back and thought, "well, it's a good thing we were so prepared. This could have been really bad. At least this was a good exercise if we have a REAL pandemic!" Slowly things returned to normal at the hospital. Surgeries resumed, services were reinstated. Summer came, and people were distracted.

Here we are once again, preparing for another "surge". The fear mongering has started again, but much worse. We are flooded with emails about the rising case numbers and how many of these patients will require hospitalization based on models. Where are these models coming from? There are empty beds and open units all over the hospital. The ICUs are near capacity, because they always are!! It is rare to have empty beds in an ICU. The hospital is NOT overcrowded!

This has become a toxic environment. We are no longer allowed to sit next to one another. They have shut down staff gyms indefinitely. They closed common areas for breaks and removed seating. All water fountains remain covered in plastic. They have redeployed staff to job duties that are out of scope, with no clear direction on when they will return to their usual jobs. We must wear a mask at all times, no exceptions, no matter what. Mask exemptions DO NOT APPLY. Many many many people are having horrible skin conditions, breathing difficulties and other health concerns as a result. It has become a tattle-tale culture where staff are encouraged to "remind" each other

how to properly wear your mask. It doesn't matter if we can't breathe. They feel it is acceptable to wear the same mask for the duration of your shift, regardless of how dirty, sweaty and bacteria-infested it has become. We have mandatory eye protection in addition to continuous masking. Some are provided with light, safety glasses while others are forced to wear full face shields. So now, we cannot breathe and we cannot see. Among the hundreds of different duties that hospital workers carry out, many of these tasks are akin to heavy physical exertion or exercise. Have you ever tried to exert yourself with a bag over your head? This is what it feels like for some disciplines and their job duties. How can we work safely? How can we provide the best care under these circumstances?

There seems to be no rhyme or reason with anything. Different units have different rules regarding visitors, COVID swabbing and isolation policies. Patients on some wards are allowed multiple visitors. Others who may be in their dying days are meant to suffer alone or require high-level permission to have visitors approved. Patients who have new "COVID" symptoms are curiously not moved into an isolation room to await the results of their swab. Rather, they remain in the same room with another patient, separated by a curtain. They share a bathroom and have the same staff looking after them. They are putting COVID positive patients in the same units as regular patients. How can they blame hospital outbreaks on staff congregating, when they cannot even follow their own isolation protocols? Regular patients with no COVID symptoms or exposures must also comply. Those with severe respiratory impairments or anxiety are not allowed to leave their room without wearing a mask.

When the initial "surge planning" began back in March, management determined there would be one "main" COVID hospital to reduce

outbreaks. Within each Hospital there are supposed to be "clean" ICUs with no COVID patients, and COVID specific ICUs to prevent staff from cross-contaminating patients. That has completely gone out the window. They keep COVID positive patients in the same ICU now as those with end-stage respiratory failure and severely immunocompromised status, despite the fact that it would be very easy and sensible to keep them in separate ICUs. This goes directly against the notion to PROTECT the vulnerable. Yes, the patients are in separate rooms, but many of the staff are the same as they are stationed to work on that particular unit. Human error is real. We make mistakes. Should we be risking mistakes on vulnerable persons because management was too short-sighted to follow their own recommendations? There are also many inconsistencies among staff "exposures" and isolation protocols. Some staff will be in full PPE and still are forced to isolate if they have worked with a COVID positive patient. We have heard stories of others being exposed without proper PPE, during procedures, in very close contact, and yet these people can return to work in less than 1 week.

What you see on the news is wrong. Yes, the hospitals are busy. They are always busy. Yes, some departments are short-staffed. That is completely normal. Perhaps if we used a more common sense or even scientific approach to dealing with potential staff exposures, we wouldn't have so many workers home on isolation when they absolutely do not need to be. It seems as though management is creating problems to justify all of these heavy restrictions, since the number of hospitalized COVID patients do not align with the mainstream media's version of this "pandemic". Stories are being twisted. Numbers are being "projected". Patient care is suffering and staff morale has never been lower. We used to be so proud to do the work that we do, and felt so fulfilled in helping others. Now, everyone

is afraid, angry and burnt out.

Now, thanks to the media, we absolutely cannot speak up. We cannot have an opinion. We are vilified for supporting protests, or believing these measures have gone too far. We cannot stray from the narrative of fear being shoved down our throats, that we are in the midst of this "Pandemic" that is putting incredible "strain" on our healthcare system. The system is creating this! And now, we are labelled as Anti-Maskers!!! We work in a hospital. We are trained to use masks and how they work. They are very beneficial in the right circumstance and for the proper reasons. We are trained, re-trained and in some professions even examined on proper donning and doffing. Some of you may question why we are afraid to speak up, or why we are not doing more to alert people about what is going on. Some of us have worked our lives to get where we are today. We have spent years in education and training, we have pride in our jobs, we love what we do, what we truly enjoy, and we are passionate about a career which we have worked so hard for. Healthcare professionals in every niche are being threatened with disciplinary action, not just with the loss of a job, but with the loss of a professional licence. In these trying economic times, we need to earn a living. Unfortunately, for most of us, we are at the mercy of our employer.

We cannot speak up at work, so we speak here with all of you today. While many hospital workers unfortunately are consumed by the fear which management has instilled upon them, we know there are others like us. Others, like all of you, who believe that our own health decisions should be made by our own selves. Thank you so much for listening.