

Spotlight on: Mary Joyce

Nursing now
Ireland

The value of nursing has never been more apparent

MARY Joyce is a clinical nurse manager 3 at St James's Hospital in Dublin. Her job involves the co-ordination and management of services and resources within the acute floor of the MED directorate. This area consists of the emergency department, the hyper-acute stroke unit, the chest pain assessment unit and a mixed medical and surgical ward.

Ms Joyce has worked in emergency departments since she qualified as a nurse in 1996. Having trained in Romford in Essex she started her career in Oldchurch Hospital.

Both her parents encouraged her to train as a nurse, so she had worked as a cadet nurse in Peamount hospital and as a nurse's aide in a nursing home in order to gain experience. She went on to do a primary degree and then a masters in advanced leadership and is a firm believer in making continued professional development more accessible to all.

"Nursing provides fantastic opportunities. A senior nurse told me when I was training that, no matter how long you're nursing you will have never seen it all. That certainly resonates now during the pandemic."

Ms Joyce recently returned from maternity leave in March and said that she was happier to have returned to work at that stage rather than returning further into the pandemic. She has a particular interest in infection control and epidemiology from her early days in training and has also completed a standalone module on microbiology.

In order to keep her husband, her parents and her three children (aged one, two and four) safe she has moved into a bedsit to avoid infecting them should she come into direct contact with Covid-19 patients.

"It's hard, but everybody is making sacrifices. People are having chemotherapy cancelled and are having to manage post-surgery wounds and pain on their

own as they just can't be in hospital."

Ms Joyce's team has put a lot of work into preparing for the pending surge of Covid-19 patients. There are issues with staff testing positive or being exposed to Covid-19 and many are having to self-isolate. Some staff have been redeployed to work in the ED. Ms Joyce said that they are holding their own so far, but have had to put in a lot of work around staffing.

Good communication is also paramount in this situation and her focus is on getting up-to-date information out to the largest possible amount of time. Her department has been restructured to facilitate Covid-flow and non-Covid-flow and Ms Joyce's role involves insuring they have an adequate supply of PPE.

The increased workload means increased pressure though and she knows how important it is to look after yourself and your colleagues at a time like this.

"At the end of every day I'm tired and exhausted. It's both exciting and scary and the pressure is bound to get to us all at some point. We're very good at looking after everyone else but we're often not so good at looking after ourselves. It's so important at a time like this."

Ms Joyce wants to see more focus on leadership and strengthening nurses' roles to ensure our health service has nurses in influential roles informing health policy and effectiveness of health and social care systems. Nurses can bring experience and clinical expertise to leadership roles. It is a versatile profession that can take you anywhere in the world. She hopes that more young people will consider nursing as a worthy profession to train for.

"I have brought people back to life and held the hands of people as they died. I have been there for the birth of babies. I have offered alternative viewpoints and solutions to problems we couldn't see a way out of.

"I once travelled in a military helicopter



Mary Joyce: "Nursing has always been a valued profession, but now during the pandemic our value is more apparent than ever."

and responded to an explosion. I have been involved in recruitment and have travelled to India in order to recruit new nurses. I have had the opportunity to sit and talk to patients and I have experienced times when all you can offer is a smile.

"I have done whole shifts without eating or drinking and then other times I have had the most amazing meals courtesy of our Indian and Filipino colleagues.

"I have gone home crying and I have also gone home elated after a fun-filled shift. What other profession can offer you all these varied experiences? Nursing has always been a valued profession, but now during the pandemic our value is more apparent than ever."

This article is part of our Nursing Now series. Nursing Now is a worldwide campaign that aims to achieve recognition of nurses' contribution to healthcare, gender equality, the economy and wider society. The aim of the campaign is to improve health globally by raising the profile of nurses worldwide and influencing policymakers and supporting nurses to lead, learn and build a global movement. For more information visit www.nursingnowireland.ie