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-It should come to no surprise that in the healthcare field there are many situations that arise that may have an ethical issue attached to it when it comes to providing patient care centered around the patients beliefs and desires. After all, the patient is in charge of their own level of care and ultimately their life. It is in the Nurses code of ethics, to protect and advocate for the patients autonomy. But what happens when treating the patient turns into an unknown safety issue for the very healthcare workers who are supporting the sick patients? This is something that isn't new in healthcare: The idea of increased risk of contracting the disease processes that we are treating. However, diseases such as HIV, Ebola and swine flu have been around and studied. We know the appropriate precautions to take and the possible outcome that may come if we do not care appropriately for this patient, aka possible cross contamination from the patient to the nurse of the disease. When Covid 19 came about in 2020, it was a new virus that we had zero experience with and zero knowledge of the long-term effects it would have on our bodies.

When any new virus is introduced to us, we take every precaution to put the appropriate barrier between the germ itself and us as healthcare providers. But what happens when we do not know how the virus is transmitted? How long it lasts in the air and on surfaces? Who does the virus affect more than others and what will the long-term side effects be? This was all unknown when the pandemic hit in 2020, and PPE quickly became scarce. Of course, the patient workload did not decrease when our masks ran out and our gowns became backordered. We had an ethical duty to treat these patients while staring the unknown in the face. Risking our possible exposure and putting our families at risk for this very new and scary virus. Nurses and all healthcare workers have an innate force to treat the sick. That is what brought them to this career. On the other hand it is necessary to put our health and the health of our families at the forefront of our concerns. Two of the most important code of ethics for nurses were put face to face in the wake of this pandemic. "The nurse's primary commitment is to the patient" VS "The nurse owes the **same duties to self as to others**, including the **responsibility to promote health and safety...**". The nurse has the right to protect themselves at all times, while they also took an oath to put the patient first.

When PPE runs out and gives you no protective barrier between you and a deadly virus you have to make a decision. Risk your safety or risk the safety of the patient by not providing adequate care. In the midst of the pandemic, PPE was minimal and scarce. Healthcare workers were being forced to reuse single use masks and gowns without knowing the time that this virus can live on surfaces. We did not know if we were contaminating ourselves by reusing these items or not, but it was all we had to work with. "If employers provide adequate PPE and appropriate guidance on how to use it, and reasonably address and mitigate the additional foreseen risks that caring for patients with Covid-19 present, then nurses and others will continue to provide patient care that is more aligned with the usual risks that health care workers knowingly take on when they enter their professions." (Hastings, 2020). This is a side of healthcare I never thought of before 2020. Up until then we always had PPE when we needed it. It took months, but ultimately companies were able to catch up with distributing masks and gowns and the hospital workers

could once again care for contagious patients with little fear that they would be contaminating themselves. Future nurses will be more aware of this and hopefully know that there may be a time in their career that they too will be faced with this dilemma. You can only do what is best for you, given the information you need to make the best decision possible.

Morley, G., Grady, C., McCarthy, J., & Ulrich, C. M. (2020, May). *Covid-19: Ethical challenges for nurses*. The Hastings Center report. Retrieved March 2, 2023, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7272859/>