

Transcript of Interview with Jacob Rowan by Joseph Rowan

Interviewee: Jacob Rowan

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Abstract: Jacob Rowan is a paramedic and new father living in Monroe, Michigan. In this interview he talks about how COVID-19 has affected his work, his experience as a new father, and his thought on the pandemic.

Joseph Rowan 0:01

What is your name?

Jacob Rowan 0:02

Jacob Lawrence Rowan.

Joseph Rowan 0:05

What is your occupation?

Jacob Rowan 0:07

I'm a paramedic in Monroe, Michigan.

Joseph Rowan 0:10

Where did you go to school and what degrees did you get?

Jacob Rowan 0:13

I went to the University of Toledo and graduated with a Bachelors of Science in exercise science. And then I went to Mercy College to obtain a certificate in paramedicine.

Joseph Rowan 0:28

Do you verbally consent that you agree your interview will be made available to the public immediately via covid19-archive.org?

Jacob Rowan 0:37

Yes.

Joseph Rowan 0:38

Thank you. First off, we're going to talk about COVID-19. Specifically, what was your initial reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Jacob Rowan 0:49

I think your initial reaction to it was just kind of shock. Everyone was kind of scared and all had kind of mixed feelings about what was going on. I know, specifically, in my profession, we were all suiting up in full suits and barely wanted to touch our patients. But it was shocking. You don't expect it.

Joseph Rowan 1:09

When did you first hear about COVID-19? I know from my personal experience, I heard it from our sister.

Jacob Rowan 1:15

Yeah, I definitely heard it from Abbey, our sister initially. And one of the first calls we had in Monroe County was down in Bedford up across 23 we had someone coming from California. So, we all got ready and got scared. All this guy called us he might be sick with COVID. So that was my first experience with it

Joseph Rowan 1:37

Over the entire pandemic, how many COVID calls do you think you've had if you could put a number to it?

Jacob Rowan 1:45

Surprisingly, not as much as you probably would have thought. Just recently, with the new spike in it, I'd probably say 10 a week or so varying from very sick to very mild flu symptoms.

Joseph Rowan 2:03

Do you think it's worse now that it's kind of spiking and people are kind of going against precautions with masks? Or do you think it's just been the same pretty much to the entire quarantine and pandemic?

Jacob Rowan 2:15

I think it feels about the same. Obviously, we're noticing a spike in people with both vaccine doses still getting it. So one way or the other I think it's about the same.

Joseph Rowan 2:31

A lot of talk happened when the pandemic first started about frontline workers. In your words, what is a frontline worker?

Jacob Rowan 2:39

I think that a frontline worker is the person that's going to be in contact with that patient initially, whether it be a firefighter, paramedic, EMT, nurse in the ER something like that.

Joseph Rowan 2:54

how did you feel being praised for working through a pandemic, especially so close to the patients?

Jacob Rowan 3:01

It was weird. You know, people normally don't seem to give two shits about us. You know, it was strange seeing it, you know, people talking about PPE's and EMS and frontline workers was an interesting thing, because that became kind of like common terminology now. You know what a PPE is when you see one in the store, somebody talks about it, you know?

Joseph Rowan 3:28

Yeah. How did EMS kind of change as a whole due to the quarantine and Coronavirus?

Jacob Rowan 3:35

To be completely honest, I don't think it really did as much as it probably should have. You know, you see some of these people where you know, you're a nurse in an ICU and you're fully gowned up, you got those papers on those big things that go on your head. You know, we have an N95, maybe gowns, maybe gloves, eye protection. It's all stuff that we should have been wearing to most calls with an infectious patient, you know, just to keep us safe, but we kind of fell off at that. So I think it's getting us back into being protective of ourselves.

Joseph Rowan 4:08

Do you think there's any reason why people like sort of paramedics or EMTs weren't safe for themselves before and then the how the Coronavirus kind of like, made them become more safe for themselves.

Jacob Rowan 4:21

Right? I think it was just a shock to the system. You know, it was uh oh, you know, you get one tuberculosis, tuberculosis patient your entire life or something, you know, that's the one where you really count up. Now it's, "Oh, shit, everybody's sick." You know, people can be sick all over the place. And you don't really think about it, you know, stuff in the air, people coughing, sneezing, you kind of blow past it without thinking too much about it. So I think it was just a big

change.

Joseph Rowan 4:48

So you said that you kind of weren't safe before the Coronavirus happened and now you are is like you said wearing them N95's or whatever, is that, like one of the procedures you went through to stop possible infection does anything different, you changed from that.

Jacob Rowan 5:09

I know, initially, before we were all vaccinated, you know, it was you want to be in full protection, you want eye protection, you want to face shield the full Tyvek suits on. Now, most people will just settle for the N95, the glasses, keep stuff out of your eyes. But that's, it's definitely changed to kind of put your perspective in. Man, this stuff's like everywhere, if you get on, you know, keep you safe, it makes you go back to being let's try and keep everything kind of sterile. And

Joseph Rowan 5:40

I kind of remember when it first started, and everyone thought that the virus could like stay alive on surfaces and stuff. So you wipe everything down, and then they kind of came out and said that it doesn't really matter that much.

Jacob Rowan 5:54

Yeah, I was, at one point I was, you know, get get off at 6am. I was taking my clothes off at work and switching into street clothes, putting it into a bag and bring it home and immediately putting in like the hottest water I possibly could. And now it's kind of just if you have a COVID patient maybe you change your clothes but aside from that you really just back to normal life if you're vaccinated at least you know,

Joseph Rowan 6:19

How often were you worried about you know, your safety, your co-workers safety or even your family safety? Like he just mentioned the changing your clothes? Did you do that? Anything else to?

Jacob Rowan 6:30

Oh, I was incredibly worried about it in the beginning. You know, it felt like World War Z or you know, Shaun of the Dead or something. You know, I was worried I had a lot of hair. So I cut my hair real short, you know, kept it nice and shaved down. I trimmed all my facial hair. It was a concern, you know, I would take my boots off who knows what's trapped in that. And then you know, you get a partner you're working with and they're *cough noises* all day you start looking at them like they're infected, and you're a little worried about that, but that might have just been my overreacting because of the newborn baby.

Joseph Rowan 7:07

So talking about the newborn baby explained to me your experience raising a child during the covid 19 pandemic?

Jacob Rowan 7:14

It's, it's been strange initially. You know, you hear about it, you know, October sometime of 2019 you're okay. That's in China. It's and you know, UK now it's, it's, it's away from us. It's distant. Paddy (his son) was born in March. So we get there. And, you know, they're making us wash your hands and put mask on and all this stuff going in. And, you know, given birth, Veronica (his wife) giving birth was everyone standing outside the room, they don't want to talk to us, they don't want to really be around us. And then you get back home, you can't go to Mom and Dad, you know, you're like, well, they're older. I don't want to get them sick. What if I picked it up while I was in the hospital? What if I picked it up at work? So it was very isolated for a long time raising a kid by yourself, you know, it takes a village. What was the village to at that point? You know, with and with your help? Obviously, we made it work.

Joseph Rowan 8:09

How do you think raising a child during a pandemic is different than just normal parenthood?

Jacob Rowan 8:15

That's a good question. Normal parenthood, I guess it's um, especially with your first kid, you know, you get mom and dad there when the baby's being born. And this whole support system that, you know, late nights or you're tired, you're sick, whatever, you can give the baby over to somebody else while you take a 40 minute nap. This we were kind of stuck. It's, you know, me and Veronica passing the baby back and forth and trying to make it work. It felt like you were in a new city. Didn't know anybody, family's miles away. So it was not a lot of lifelines there.

Joseph Rowan 8:52

Yeah, I remember I didn't see him for the first like month or so. Finally got to see him.

Jacob Rowan 8:57

Which is a huge development period, you know, you see him open his eyes and get really reactive and stuff. And your family kind of misses out on that and you've missed, you know, showing them the new, sparkly, baby, you know,

Joseph Rowan 9:08

so when we went on lockdown, how did you keep yourself busy?

Jacob Rowan 9:12

I think I have a good amount of hobbies to kind of keep myself busy. Whether it be you know, drawing or you know, playing video games or something like that. Having a kid kind of keeps you busy to begin with. Yeah, giving myself pretty crappy tattoos in my attic always helps too.

Joseph Rowan 9:34

What do you miss most about your pre COVID life?

Jacob Rowan 9:38

Ah, I don't really think that anything's really changed for me. That might speak because I'm a loser. But I think everything has been about the same. I hang out with with the family a lot. I hang out with you a lot. You know, people at work are about the same, especially if you're vaccinated, not much has really changed. You know, I guess just the fear of getting sick now is gone. So it's kind of like, pre COVID life, but I think it's been about the same.

Joseph Rowan 10:11

Yeah, when I got COVID it really didn't affect me. So seeing stuff like that kind of changes perspective. And, I mean, we followed guidelines to get them out like, I know you weren't a big fan of masks, but you still wore them.

Jacob Rowan 10:28

Yeah, I definitely still are, I still wear a, you know, and N95 and stuff at work when it's potential sick patient or I wear a normal surgical mask with every patient. That definitely that's kind of something that did change those, I don't think I'll ever stop wearing a mask because some people can be pretty gross and you don't want that stuff in your mouth or your eyes, whatever. So maybe COVID kind of changed my future rather than changing my pre COVID life, you know?

Joseph Rowan 10:58

Is there anything else you want to add?

Jacob Rowan 11:01

Um, I know a lot of people they always ask that question of, you know, how sick are people, people really sick that you take the hospital, and I'm gonna be completely honest, I haven't seen a lot of very sick people. You know, you talk about people getting vented or, you know, putt in the ICU and stuff. And obviously it happens. I'm not saying it doesn't happen. But in my personal experience, I haven't seen it a lot. It's been a lot of mild symptoms, whether they be unvaccinated or vaccinated. So strong strongly suggest you get a vaccine.

Joseph Rowan 11:36

Are you vaccinated?

Jacob Rowan 11:37

I am I lost my vaccination card. So I might be double vaxxed here soon. But I think it's a good thing. I think it protects people, especially the young kids or older people. You don't want to get sick or whatever. So but it's America. So do whatever you want.

Joseph Rowan 11:55

Thank you.

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