

Carrie Brown Oral History 08/01/2020

Interviewee: Carrie Brown

Interviewer: Cody Brown

Date: 08/01/2020

Location (Interviewee): Rockwell, IA (USA)

Location (Interviewer): Logan, IA (USA)

Abstract:

Carrie Brown is currently a flight nurse employed with Mercy One- North Iowa in Mason City, Iowa. Carrie has worked at Mercy One- North Iowa since getting her degree in nursing (then called Mercy Medical Center- North Iowa) and has worked as a flight nurse since 2012. Carrie's day to day life is currently outside the normal as she is living with her husband, Don, and their dog in a camper for the summer while they build a new house. In this interview, Carrie reflects on her interactions with friends and family and how her routines at her job have changed since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Carrie offers a unique insight as to the current state of the pandemic by providing firsthand knowledge and perspective as a medical care provider. Carrie also addresses her personal stance on the pandemic as seen through the eyes of a medical professional and through conversations with other medical professionals.

Cody Brown 0:08

Okay, so this is Cody Brown. The current date is August 1, 2020. The current time is 4:48pm. Could you state your name for me please?

Carrie Brown 0:20

This is Carrie Brown.

Cody Brown 0:22

Okay. And Carrie, where are you living currently?

Carrie Brown 0:26

Rockwell, Iowa.

Cody Brown 0:28

Okay. What is your current career?

Carrie Brown 0:32

I'm currently a flight nurse with a hospital here in Mason City, Iowa.

Cody Brown 0:38

Do you have a family and if so, what is the composition of your family?

Carrie Brown 0:45

I do have a family. Currently my husband and I live with our dog and I have two adult sons one is married, and one is not. No grandchildren.

Cody Brown 0:56

No grandchildren, okay.

So, the next few questions are going to be just general daily life questions.

So, what does a typical day look like for you, currently?

Carrie Brown 1:15

A typical day looks different for me right at the moment because we are currently living in a camper while we build a house. Um get up in the morning. Get ready typically head to work been volunteering a lot lately with the COVID, in different positions. I will work 8 to 12 hours, sometimes 24 if I'm on my flight job. Then come home to cook and clean and of course you know I'm camping so I got drink a little beer, most evenings. Several walks with the dog during the day, and since I don't have my home, I don't have any hobbies, so I don't do much else besides spend some time on the computer and run a couple businesses. I sell dry nail polish and we have a scuba diving shop, spend a lot of time on those as well. In a nutshell, I'm kinda boring.

Cody Brown 2:22

Well, obviously not having a house makes a huge difference, so.

Carrie Brown 2:25

It does.

Cody Brown 2:27

How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your daily activities?

Carrie Brown 2:34

That's kind of hard to tell because that's about the same time we sold our house and moved into a camper. I would have to say for me, it has not changed them much. Because I am not a firm believer that this was something we should be terrified of and change our economy for. I believe that it's just another virus. Just another flu season. So, I would have to say it hasn't changed me much. Except at work when I have to wear a mask then I will.

Cody Brown 3:11

Has the pandemic changed the way in which you interact with friends, family, or other community members at all?

Carrie Brown 3:20

I in the beginning briefly a bit because I have frail elderly, frail or elderly I should say, parents, brother and initially before we knew too much about it, I did not want to get them sick. But since then, I would say no, it has not affected the way I interact with others. My circle of people kind of feel the same way I do. So, they haven't changed much as far as interaction.

Cody Brown 3:54

Okay. How has the pandemic affected interactions within groups to which you belong? Like a church or any clubs or teams you might be a part of.

Carrie Brown 4:03

Yeah. That has, I haven't been to church since the pandemic because they were not meeting initially and now it's required to wear a mask during the entire thing and I'm a little stubborn I don't want to wear a mask. I guess my life did change a bit because restaurants were closed down and you can't sit down and have a meal or coffee with friends anymore. So, we have to do that in a different fashion.

What was the original question again? Oh groups.

I don't really belong to a lot of groups otherwise, what it has done is made it very difficult to get continuing education or my healthcare career, however, because they have been cancelled, postponed, or the class sizes have been decreased dramatically. So I guess it's affected that part of my life.

Cody Brown 5:02

The next few sets of questions are going to be basic questions about employment during the pandemic. So, if you don't feel comfortable answering any of them, obviously just let me know and we can go ahead and skip that question.

Carrie Brown 5:20

Okay.

Cody Brown 5:21

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your employment status, or has it?

Carrie Brown 5:27

It has, both good and bad. Initially, they cut my hours. I work 24 hour shifts. Initially they took away one 24 hour shift every six weeks and expected us to use PTO. That for us has been suspended since we're kind of a hybrid type program. Therefore, I decided that I would investigate other opportunities.

So, I have picked up hours taking temperature been asking questions at local medical offices. I have also picked up hours at the COVID testing station where people come to get their COVID tests. And at what we have it's manned Mercy Family Helpline where people call in and ask questions about their health requesting information about whether they should see their physician or home remedies. But now, there's also an influx of calls about "Do I need to be tested for COVID? If so, how do I do that? Where do I go?" So, my hours initially were cut but don't have any problem having way more than 40 hours a week if wanted.

Cody Brown 6:46

So, for you, your initial employment hours, were kind of cut, but you've been able to pick up extra shifts in some different areas of the hospital and clinics to make up for that.

Carrie Brown 6:59

Yep.

Cody Brown 7:01

What additional precautions if any, is your employer taking in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Carrie Brown 7:07

Oh, good grief, it's over and above and then some. Temperature screening every time you come to work plus the list of questions "do you have any or all of the symptoms that possibly are related to COVID," which is anything nowadays. We have to wear a mask. Any time we're forward facing taking care of patients we have to wear an N95 covered by a surgical mask and goggles and/or a face shield. Taking care of patients, we also spend some time in the ER so taking care of patients who doing treatments on them. You have to wear all that plus a gown and gloves and everything has to be wiped down all the time, way more than it used to.

Trying to think. Oh, can't eat in the common areas anymore. You have to take your lunch back to your unit and hideaway in a little corner eat. For a while in the cafeteria you couldn't get a hot meal. It was all cold prepackaged stuff. You know how yummy hospital meals are anyway.

Trying to think if there was anything else crazy. Oh, I think that's probably about it.

Cody Brown 8:44

Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your view towards your career choice and if it has, how so?

Carrie Brown 8:52

It has not. It's changed my attitude or view of the democrats but not my career choice.

Cody Brown 9:01

Okay, and without using names, do any medical professionals you work with, doctors or specialists, for example, have differing opinions towards the pandemic than the information that the government experts are releasing?

Carrie Brown 9:14

Oh, good lord. Yes. A lot of physicians - and I was just talking to my husband about that we have a friend who's a physician in common, and that person says, "it's bullshit, it's all bullshit." I've heard a few physicians say that as well. Okay.

Cody Brown 9:37

We just have a few more questions left. This last section of questions is going to be health related questions outside of what we just asked regarding your employment. So outside of people you tend to at work, have you or anyone you know contracted COVID-19?

Carrie Brown 9:55

Actually, yes. Do you want to know who? What employment they hold?

Cody Brown 10:02

Well, I don't think we need to go that in depth just - their privacy is important. So, I'll follow up with has this changed your interaction with or attitude towards this individual at all?

Carrie Brown 10:15

Negative, it has not. Other than they're not at work so I don't see them at work anymore.

Cody Brown 10:25

That's, that's understandable.

How do you think the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the health physical or mental of individuals?

Carrie Brown 10:39

Um I... I think that a lot of individuals are terrified for no reason. I believe there's a lot - I've talked to a few people on the Mercy Family Helpline that have increased depression, increased suicidal thoughts. I think people are stir crazy wondering what to do with their children, their family members that can't do their normal activities.

Repeat the question for me. I'm getting off track.

Cody Brown 11:27

How do you think the COVID pandemic has affected the health, either physical or mental, of individuals?

Carrie Brown 11:35

Um, I do believe in my mind, I do believe that this flu season is going to be atrocious because people are so afraid to be exposed to anything and then mask wearing so everybody's immunity is going to be tanked. It's going to be nonexistent. I think we're going to see an increase in other illnesses as well because we're not exposed to anything.

Cody Brown 12:02

So, you think the pandemic has not only changed the physical health of some people in regard to the coronavirus, but also long term health effects with other illnesses due to the lack of exposure to germs and viruses?

Carrie Brown 12:21

Yep. 100% It's like using all the antibacterial soaps and washes and everything. We're killing everything we - killing everything good that we use to defend ourselves.

Cody Brown 12:39

A couple more questions. What do you perceive as the state of a pandemic one year from now?

Carrie Brown 12:51

What can I say? I think it depends on who gets elected on November 4th. Again, I think this is rather bullshit and I believe it's 99% political. I really have no idea. I have no idea.

Cody Brown 13:13

And the final question here, if you could give one piece of advice to the general public regarding their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, what would it be?

Carrie Brown 13:23

Live your life like you normally did. Just wash your hands, be more cognizant of what you do. But don't, don't wear a mask and wear gloves and be afraid. In the long run, it's going to be worse off if we play like we're China and wear a mask 24/7, 8 days a week. Just be sensible wash your hands. Stuff we should have been doing all along.

Cody Brown 13:58

Okay, and that was the final question. Thank you for your time. If you want to hang out on the line for a minute, I'm going to stop the recording and I'll give you some further information.

Carrie Brown 14:08

Thank you!

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