

## Transcript of Oral History Interview with Jennifer Rehling

**Interviewee:** Jennifer Rehling

**Interviewer:** Conner Rehling

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**Abstract:** This interview was recorded as part of The Covid 19 Oral History Project, a project of the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute associated with The Journal of a Plague Year: A Covid 19 Archive. This interview was conducted through the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of credit for HIST3158 under the supervision of Dr. Rebecca S. Wingo.

**Conner Rehling 00:01**

What is the date and time?**Jennifer Rehling 00:04**

Today is Sunday, October 4 at 5:15pm.

**Conner Rehling 00:10**

Awesome. And so, what is your name and the primary things you do on a day to day basis?

**Jennifer Rehling 00:16**

My name is Jennifer Rehling and I am an assistant nurse manager for the tri health Cancer Institute.

**Conner Rehling 00:25**

So, where do you live, what is it like to live there?

**Jennifer Rehling 00:29**

I live in West Chester Ohio, um, you'll see anywhere from upper middle class to lower middle class.

**Conner Rehling 00:45**

All right, and when you first learned about COVID-19. What were your first thoughts on it and how have your thoughts changed since then?

**Jennifer Rehling 00:54**

At first, I didn't think it was as serious as they were trying to say it was, and I have definitely changed my opinion on that, given that I work in the medical field.

**Conner Rehling 01:07**

What issues, have you most concerned about covid 19 pandemic?

**Jennifer Rehling** 01:16

I think really the elderly. You know we're trying to save them physically but we're ruining their mental well being.

**Conner Rehling** 01:28

So, how is work? I mean, obviously you're a nurse. So how has COVID-19 affected your job, and in what ways has it done that?

**Jennifer Rehling** 01:41

It has affected a lot, and in the very beginning we were forced to basically close down the hospital, and then we let patients in with no family members. And even in the infusion centers where I have nurses, very hard to be telling people they have horrible diagnoses and not be able to have a family member, there to support them financially we were all furloughed for a time so we all had to take a little bit of a financial hit when this all first started.

**Conner Rehling** 02:19

So, how is COVID-19 changed your employment status, you kind of just mentioned that but can you go in more depth about that?

**Jennifer Rehling** 02:28

Luckily my status stayed the same, we questioned for a while, whether we were gonna lose jobs. Um, we did have to lose some staff, out of the Cancer Institute, but because cancer being the nature of what it is we didn't lose a lot of business so we stayed financially pretty secure and helped the hospital through the worst of the time.

**Conner Rehling** 02:54

What concerns, do you have about the effects of COVID-19 on your employment, and even more, even the economy in a broader sense?

**Jennifer Rehling** 03:05

For my employment. I think I'll always have my job but the management raises and bonuses are due right now and it's a question whether we're going to get them. But at least I have a job so I can't complain too much. Economically, I foresee a lot of small businesses closing down, which is very sad.

**Conner Rehling** 03:33

Given the COVID-19 pandemic how has it affected the employment of other people, people that you are close to?

**Jennifer Rehling** 03:45

Well in my work environment we have had to scale down and some people have lost their jobs throughout the whole hospital system. Our hospital system did a very good job at helping those people who lost their jobs, get employment, either somewhere else in our system, or outside our system. But I don't know of anybody that doesn't have a job that wants to be working because of COVID. It just looks a little different. A lot of people working from home.

**Conner Rehling 04:17**

So, how is COVID-19 affected your day to day activities?

**Jennifer Rehling 04:25**

It has a large scale. We're very social people. I have very much limited who my social circle is right now where I go. I haven't seen my family, more specifically, my parents because they're elderly. So yeah, it's definitely changed the day to day.

**Conner Rehling 04:48**

That was your work changed on a day-to-day basis?

**Jennifer Rehling 04:53**

Um, well obviously we all have to be wearing masks, keeping things much cleaner. We are now letting one visitor in when they go to the doctor appointment but still no but no visitors. When they get the infusion room.

**Conner Rehling 05:23**

Has the COVID-19 outbreak affected how you associate and communicate with your friends and families? You just kind of mentioned that a little bit but can you go a little more depth?

**Jennifer Rehling 05:33**

Yeah, I have a smaller group that I hang out with now, because I know they're COVID conscious. Family I haven't really seen a whole lot again because of my elderly parents and us trying to keep them protected. So, holidays have been much different birthdays, things like that. Not the social that we're used to.

**Conner Rehling 06:01**

Yeah. And so, what do you think the biggest challenges you have faced during the pandemic I've been?

**Jennifer Rehling 06:11**

I think keeping my nurses at work, supported as they have felt the emotional pull of dealing with the patients when they are getting the worst news of their life and not having a loved one sit next to them while they're getting that news. It's been very emotional on all of our nurses to see patients not get what they need.

**Conner Rehling 06:40**

So, what have you done in your free time, and recreation, because of COVID-19 like, what, what did you used to do and how has it changed?

**Jennifer Rehling 06:48**

Um, lots of more time in the house, than before. Netflix has gotten a workout, that's for sure.

**Conner Rehling 06:59**

So how would you say that COVID-19 has affected your community, whether that be like schools, churches, any sort of club you belong to?

**Jennifer Rehling 07:12**

Um, well I haven't been to church since this all started they are doing it remotely or they have one outdoor service downtown. So definitely is affected that aspect. We can watch it online but it's definitely not the same as being in a building and being with people and feeling the community.

**Conner Rehling 07:34**

Yeah. So how are people like how do you see people around you responding to the pandemic?

**Jennifer Rehling 07:39**

There's lots of it's very variable, and some people are very cautious. My sister doesn't really leave the house except to go to the grocery store. I have other friends who act like nothing's happened nothing in the world is happening, and haven't changed their behavior, and well even travel out of state. There are also those people kind of in the middle who are taking precautions but still live their life daily.

**Conner Rehling 08:13**

Yeah. So, have you seen people around you change their opinions or their day to day activities or relationships in response to the pandemic? What did it look like for some of your friends at the beginning of the quarantine and what it looks like now?

**Jennifer Rehling 08:27**

I think I've had friends go both ways on that. We have had some friends that were very cautious in the beginning but because no one around them has been affected they've loosened up, probably more than they should. And I've had people who didn't really buy into it at the beginning. Have someone affected by it and saw the devastation and now they are have gone the other direction.

**Conner Rehling 08:54**

So, isolation and flattening the curve have been two key ideas that are mentioned during the pandemic. How have you, your family, your friends in the community responded to self isolation, flattening the curve or quarantining.

**Jennifer Rehling 09:10**

Um, I especially I think in the beginning, we did very well with the self isolation. And we really did flatten the curve. In Cincinnati we had the convention center ready to go as a step down hospital for the city and we did not even have to use that because of our efforts successful efforts of flattening the curve. I think as time has gone on a lot of people have given up a little bit on the isolation and trying to get back to normal life.

**Conner Rehling 09:47**

Yeah, I agree with you on that for sure. How is COVID-19 changing relationships with friends, family and community?

**Jennifer Rehling 10:01**

Um, I think it has definitely strengthened friendships that I know that are close ones. I know who my go to people are, um, it's made me miss my family. And I think it's given me a sense of value to those friends that I keep close.

**Conner Rehling 10:32**

So, have you or anybody that you know, including some of those friends gotten sick during Covid 19 outbreak? You mentioned about how some of your friends have changed their minds about the pandemic because someone in their family has been sick, what can you comment on that?

**Jennifer Rehling 10:49**

Um yes, I've seen quite a few. One of my nurses, when she got sick right at the very beginning, we saw what she went through and I think that's why I have been more cautious, maybe from the beginning. We have another friend now that just got care flighted to the Cleveland Clinic. She's been on ECMO and event for weeks and most likely will not make it through this.

**Conner Rehling 10:49**

In what ways do you think that COVID-19 is affecting people's mental and or physical health?

**Jennifer Rehling 11:34**

I think for those people who get COVID-19, it's very much physical, for those of us who had been fortunate enough not to get it, it's very much, mental, it's causing a lot of social isolation, especially for the elderly people in nursing homes that you know rely on their family to come in and they cannot or in the hospital cannot even my family, my parents who are just in a house together. You can see the depression setting in.

**Conner Rehling 12:13**

What has been your primary sources of news during the pandemic?

**Jennifer Rehling 12:16**

To be honest I watching the news in the beginning and I watched it very faithfully every day for the updates. And then it got to a point where, I couldn't watch it anymore because I was living it every day at work, and then coming home and watching the newscasts.

**Conner Rehling 12:43**

So, when you're watching did you watch it on TV, were you using the internet or a newspaper?

**Jennifer Rehling 12:49**

TV.

**Conner Rehling 12:53**

And how have those sources changed during the pandemic?

**Jennifer Rehling 12:59**

I actually had to stop viewing them between COVID and work stress and the other things that have been happening in society. It just got to be too overwhelming to watch the news all the time so I quit watching.

**Conner Rehling 13:18**

What do you think are important issues that they mean the media may or may not be covering?

**Jennifer Rehling 13:29**

Um, to be honest, since I'm not really watching the news a lot right now. I'm not sure what they are, or not covering. I think one issue that has not talked about a whole lot is the long term effects of COVID survivors.

**Conner Rehling 13:52**

How have municipal leaders, and government officials in your community responded to the outbreak?

**Jennifer Rehling 14:01**

I think the governor of Ohio has done an excellent job. And our local government at flattening the curve. They got out ahead and they were some of the first to respond and take such harsh measures. They're in a no-win situation they're always going to have someone saying they're being too strict and then the other half saying they're not strict enough, they can't do right either way they go.

**Conner Rehling 14:30**

So, do you have any thoughts on how the local and like West Chester and how the federal leaders are responding to the crisis?

**Jennifer Rehling 14:44**

I mean I think they're taking the recommendations from the, CDC and encouraging people to wear masks in social distance, and I think they're trying to walk a fine line between keeping us all healthy but keeping the economy going.

**Conner Rehling 15:07**

Yeah. Has your experience transformed the way you think about family and friends and community because of all this?

**Jennifer Rehling 15:16**

Absolutely. I think I took it for granted, especially family. My siblings and my parents, I took my time with them for granted. When I could always be with them and now that I can't. I think it's more special or important.

**Conner Rehling 15:36**

Yeah. How does this pandemic compared to other large events that have happened in your lifetime?

**Jennifer Rehling 15:50**

I'm sorry that's a hard question. The only thing I can think I can compare this possibly to is 911, because that's the only other thing that is really hit on a scale across the entire country or world. And I think the similarities are during that time and during this you've seen people become heroes everyday people become heroes, doing things they either normally wouldn't have done, or going above and beyond.

**Conner Rehling 16:28**

Yeah, what do you what do you imagine your life being like in a year from now? Like do you feel like we're going to be closer to normal?

**Jennifer Rehling 16:37**

I think. I'm hoping we'll be closer to normal i think COVID is going to become like the flu and that it's seasonal and we're never going to get rid of it. But hopefully we'll have better cures for it, or vaccines but yeah I don't see it ever going away. I would like to live without a mask.

**Conner Rehling 17:03**

Knowing what you know now. What do you think that individuals, communities or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

**Jennifer Rehling 17:19**

I think people need to realize that when things like this happen., the experts don't have the answers either right away and I think people were not very forgiving in that. Things didn't move quickly or they're getting information that wasn't always accurate. I think we had a lot of armchair quarterbacks in the whole thing. A lot of people who thought, they know what's going on or expected other people to very quickly have answers and I think we need to learn patience in that area.

**Conner Rehling 18:04**

Awesome. I just want to thank you for your time and your willingness to be interviewed. I appreciate it a lot.

**Jennifer Rehling 18:12**

Thank you.