

Covid-19 Redeployment Reflection

I am a Band 6 MSK Physiotherapist who has been re-deployed to respiratory over the Covid-19 outbreak. I have now been working across critical care, HDU, our Covid rehab ward and our typical respiratory wards for the last 5 weeks. I have been assessing and treating a combination of patients with and without Covid-19.

Heading back to respiratory, after some time away from it, was initially a daunting prospect. Not only did I feel pressure to get back up to speed with respiratory skills, but it also brought challenges such as a new team, new hours and constantly changing guidelines regarding patient management and PPE. However, these feelings soon settled thanks to the brilliant organisation, planning and support from the respiratory team. In my opinion, the approach to the situation within therapies was well planned and executed quickly, meaning we had time to settle in and upskill before it got too busy. This really helped to settle any anxiety and worry about what was expected of us, and gave us an opportunity to work alongside those more experienced in respiratory before gaining more independence.

The past 5 weeks have been a rollercoaster of emotions. I have felt out of my comfort zone and both physically and emotionally drained from long shifts, heavy rehabs and anxiety about the evolving Covid-19 outbreak. It has been hard at times when, despite best efforts, unfortunately, some patients lost their fight against Covid-19. However, I have also had some very rewarding experiences. I have thoroughly enjoyed being a significant part of the patient's journeys from admission, through potential intubation, to early/late-stage rehab and finally on to discharge from hospital. Helping patients sit out for the first time, and sending photos to their families or enabling patients with tracheostomies to speak to their loved ones after weeks sedated and paralysed on a ventilator, are experiences that will stick with me for a long time.

Despite the challenges, I have also observed lots of positives that have come from this. I have been fortunate to work and be part of a fantastic team who have made this period much easier for me. Everyone has had to change their way of working, even those who were already part of the respiratory team, yet no one has complained. Everyone is tired yet has still pulled together and just got on with the job. It shows how flexible and adaptable we are as therapists, a huge asset to us all. Changing our hours into a shift pattern, so that we have a team of therapists on site from 7.30 am- 10 pm has meant that our patients have had increased contacts throughout the day and more opportunity for rehab. Working alongside therapists from different specialities, whom you may rarely cross paths with has offered lots of opportunities for learning new skills and also making new friends! Over the last weeks and months, many barriers and hierarchies have been broken and I feel some key learning outcomes can be learned from and implemented in the future.

Thank you to all within NUH therapies, but particularly the respiratory teams who have worked tirelessly to ensure we offer the best service and care for our patients, whilst keeping staff safe and morale high!

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