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CRNAs at New York Cancer Center Stand Ready to Serve Patients

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By Patricia Flesher

AANA Public Relations and Communications

Like other healthcare providers across the country, Laura Ardizzone, DNP, CRNA, ACNP, DCC, has not had a typical day for several weeks. As director of nurse anesthesia services overseeing more than 130 Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) in a cancer-only facility, her first priority is to care for cancer patients at the New York City-based Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

The hospital is ready for a patient surge, whether that be COVID-19 patients or by accepting cancer patients from other hospitals to help free up other facilities' resources.



CRNAs are uniquely positioned to lead in patient care during this pandemic given their expertise in advanced ventilator management and providing oversight of patients needing airway management and critical care.

According to Ardizzone, MSK's intensive care team will include CRNAs, anesthesiologists, and advance practice professionals, such as intensive care unit (ICU) and postanesthesia care unit nurse practitioners/physician assistants, as well as critical care nurses.

"We have ramped up training, both for CRNAs and by CRNAs. CRNAs are natural educators, and we want to help wherever there is need," said Ardizzone.

"Our CRNAs are holding personal protective equipment (PPE) 'donning and doffing' classes for other hospital employees. Putting on PPE correctly is much more intuitive than taking the equipment off in the right way to reduce the spread of disease. We have also held training classes for dealing with COVID-19 airway challenges in the ICU and gathered resources for CRNAs to take continuing education courses in management of ICU patients," she said.

CRNAs like having a plan A, B, and C and for many of us this time of uncertainty is very stressful, said Ardizzone. "Several are worried about their own personal safety, or the safety and care of children who no longer are in school and may be without usual caregivers. But we come to work because we are passionate about what we do and the patients we care for. We are doing all we can to care for the staff, including deploying those where there is the most need and securing PPE."

"In all of this it has been heartwarming to see how people have come together," said Ardizzone. "Doctors, nurses, advanced practice professionals, and our administrative colleagues have all asked, 'what can I do?' 'Where do you need me?' It doesn't matter the task."

American Association of Nurse Anesthetists

222 S. Prospect Avenue, Park Ridge, IL 60068-4037

Phone: 847-692-7050 | Fax: 847-720-7617.

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