

As the world steps back, healthcare professionals from around the globe are going above and beyond to serve those in need during this COVID-19 crisis. Dr. Kristofer Smith, naviHealth's President of Home-Based Medical Care, is one of these dedicated workers, tirelessly answering the call to volunteer for the cause despite not practicing acute care medicine in over a decade. These are his daily stories – uncut and untouched, as told from the front lines.

Day 1 - Opening night



We stood anxiously around a newly built nursing station. The explosion of COVID-19 cases required a certain level of creativity when repurposing our space. This particular floor had until recently held an orthopedics ambulatory surgery service. For now, it'll serve patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 and can't yet go home or for patients who were beyond the reach of our medical care where we shift our focus only to comfort.

The room was bright, the shelves well stocked and there was adequate personal protective equipment, but the team assembled for the care of these patients was nervous. The group had been pulled from other parts of the healthcare system: there were neurosurgery physician assistants, orthopedic nurse practitioners, nurses from the operating room, personal care assistants who were billers and registrars and the only doctor, me, hadn't taken care of an inpatient in 10 years.

None of us had done the exact work ahead and we hoped we would be able to meet the clinical and emotional demands of our patients and their families. We talked about the task at hand and why those in the room had volunteered. The desire to help was palpable and the willingness to be in an environment filled with risk of infection laudable. The intriguing dynamic at play is it's my job to lead this group, to understand their anxieties as well as their competencies and to set the tone for expectations while we're all together.

After a few more team building exercises, the call came – our first patient, a transfer from another hospital, had arrived. In rolled the stretcher, pushed by two emergency medical technicians gowned, gloved and masked. They transferred the patient to hospital bed #109 and we got to work.

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