

summer 2020

special issue

Message from David Wyman

These are extraordinary times for all of us. Although no one was prepared for the magnitude of what we are facing, the Gracie Square team has done a remarkable job of caring for both the mental and physical well-being of patients in our Hospital during this pandemic.

Governor Cuomo recently spoke about the honor, dignity, and strength of character of essential workers who put themselves at risk to protect others. Every day at Gracie Square, staff in all jobs put fear aside to come to work to do their best for patients and support their coworkers.

We will get past this time, but I will always remember the bravery, dedication, and camaraderie of our Gracie Square team. You are truly heroes. Thank you.



President and CEO

Transforming Gracie Square to Care for Patients during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Because of the dedication, skill, and flexibility of our employees, Gracie Square is providing high quality care to patients throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Following are some highlights of the many ways the Gracie Square team are meeting challenges to care for those we serve as safely as possible.



Protecting Patients: Since so much of the care we provide is based in group activity, patients are now assigned to small cohorts, limiting contact with others. All patients, as well as staff, are wearing masks, and Environmental Services (EVS) stays abreast of evolving infection prevention and control procedures. In order to reduce the risk of infection, patients can no longer receive visitors. To provide much-needed contact with loved ones, patients now have opportunities for virtual communication.

Caring for Patients with Covid-19: As the pandemic progressed, Gracie Square began receiving patients with mild Covid-19 symptoms. We set up a Covid Unit where patients receive both mental and physical health care. Patients with more severe symptoms are immediately transported to NYP/Weill Cornell Medical Center.

Protecting Staff: In preparation for the virus coming here, we instituted Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) training for staff. PPE is required for all staff entering the Covid-19 Unit. Additionally, we have set up a program that provides staff on all Units with clean scrubs daily, which they remove before going home. Scrubs are then sent out to be laundered. Space was reconfigured at the Hospital to permit on-site staff to do phone and computer work while maintaining social distancing. In addition, many local restaurants are donating food, so staff can receive three meals a day without leaving the Hospital. This food donation program is coordinated by NewYork-Presbyterian. *(continues on page 2)*

Member

 **NewYork-Presbyterian**
Regional Hospital Network

Healthcare Heroes: We are All in this Together

Gracie Square staff put themselves at risk every day to come to work to care for patients and support each other. Here are some photos of just a few of our heroes and reflections on what this experience has meant. ■

"I am so proud of our staff. We have employees who have upended their lives to be able to come to work for our patients, while keeping their own loved ones, who may be elderly or vulnerable, safe at home."

Francine Fakih, MA, RN
Director of Nursing

"It has been so inspiring to watch my nursing team show great resilience and courage in the face of such uncertainty. Despite current social distancing practices, they never lost sight of the importance and power of human connection, not just with their patients, but also with each other."

Jessica Mareiro, MSN, RN-BC
Patient Care Director, Covid-19 Unit

"Gracie Square's EVS workers have a critical role in stopping the spread of infection to patients and staff, and keeping others safe. They are also playing an important role in the new Hospital initiative to provide Unit staff with clean scrubs daily, so employees can return home with more peace of mind at the end of the day."

Sherwin Connell
Director of Support Services

"Gracie Square is small, and we are like a family. Going through this crisis together has made us even closer. We have grown and learned, and our experience will make the Hospital an even better place for patients in the future."

Alex Rodriguez
Director of Security



Thank you to the restaurants that are donating meals to staff and to Aramark for the gift bags full of useful supplies for staff to take home.

Transforming Gracie Square

continued from cover

Leveraging the NewYork-Presbyterian System: Gracie Square is an integral member of the NewYork-Presbyterian System, and the benefit of this affiliation was never more evident. As Covid-19 hospitalizations were increasing, Gracie Square admitted patients from NYP Brooklyn Methodist Hospital and NYP Allen Hospital, allowing those locations to repurpose mental health Units to provide surge capacity for medical/surgical patients. Staff from NYP Allen were reassigned to help us care for our patients as well as transfers. At the same time, NYP is helping us get much-needed PPE that we don't normally order. Being included in their Command Center enables us to benefit from broad expertise, quickly learn infection control best practices, and implement them here. ■