

My Wife Works in a Covid Hotspot

César Carela Vázquez

BEFORE YOU READ: What is a Covid hotspot? Describe a Covid hotspot you're familiar with.

Feeling the Terror

Since the beginning of February when the news about this pandemic started, we were scared because my wife is a nurse. She has a very high risk job in a situation like this. Every day we saw the news of what was happening in Wuhan, China. The government put a blockade on the city, and no one could leave or enter the city. We saw stories of people who had no place to sleep. They had to sleep in the subway trains because they could not get out of Wuhan and back to their homes before Wuhan closed.

Imagine the psychological terror that we were feeling during those days. From that moment, we began to take precautions. We stayed home as much as possible, but we still had to go to work each day. My wife is a nurse at the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, Massachusetts. This home for veterans turned out to be a Covid-19 hotspot. Every day, two or three patients died. As of June 24, 2020, 76 veterans have died of the virus, 84 more were infected, and more than 80 staff members were also infected. How could so many people die in such a short time? We were terrified. Every night, we prayed that God would protect us and help us control our fears in this situation.

Co-workers Test Positive

One by one, my wife's co-workers tested positive. This led the National Guard to intervene in the hospital because there was practically no one who could care for the patients. It was a very severe crisis. I myself did not know what to do because my wife came home crying every day from the hospital. She was nervous and super scared by everything that she was experiencing in there. So many people died! For her, the most difficult



César Carela Vázquez and his wife.

thing was to see people who had been strong, but then the virus ended their life in a ruthless way. In just days, they went from being well, walking around, and playing cards, to a coffin.

What I am expressing is a little strong, but this is what we were going through. Sometimes, I asked myself how a person could be consoled at a time like this. I just started talking to God to ask for strength and to give support to my wife. Weekly, she took the test and always got a negative result, until just a few days ago.

Getting Tested

About nine days ago, my wife began to feel symptoms such as tiredness and pain in her face and decided to go to the doctor to have the test. But her doctor would not give her the test. He said she didn't have enough symptoms, despite the fact that she informed him that she worked at the Soldiers' Home. She had to find another doctor who performed the test, and she tested positive.

When she told me the news, my head began to hurt. Since then, we have been in extreme quarantine at home. We are afraid to go out shopping

for fear of infecting other people. My mother-in-law helped us to do shopping the first few days so we wouldn't have to leave the house. She brought food and left it at the door. Also, our friends from church helped us by bringing us food and other supplies. My adult education program donated food as well, and one of my classmates, Ms. Medeya, made a mask for me. It has been very useful. I wash it every day with alcohol and hot water, and I use it again.

My wife's symptoms have been coughing, body pain, and chest pain. She has not had a fever. As for me, I have not felt any type of symptoms. I keep drinking natural fruit juices and eating well to raise my body's defenses against the virus. My wife and I keep distance between the two of us. We sleep in separate rooms. As I write this composition, I am wearing gloves and a mask, since my wife also uses this computer to talk to the doctor, among other things.

God Has a Purpose

My wife consults with the doctor twice a week by video call. He advised that I take the test, so yesterday, I did. I am now waiting for the results. I know inside my heart that this pandemic will end someday and that God has a purpose for this whole situation. It is to make us more aware of our neighbors and our environment, and to see life in a different way — more beautiful every day.

César Carela Vázquez is a student at the Valley Opportunity Council in Chicopee, MA. His wife has recovered from Covid, and he has so far tested negative. César says, "After a few days, my wife returned to the battlefield to work and to give everything she could. I hope this article will give you hope that you can survive this situation and trust that God is with you at all times."

AFTER YOU READ: What stands out to you about César's story? Write a letter to César and say what you appreciate about how he has handled the situation. Refer to details from the text.

Healthcare Workers' Union Leads the Fight for More Resources for Frontline Workers



Kwesi Ablordeppey has worked as a Certified Nursing Assistant at the Soldiers' Home for 20 years.

Workers have more power if they are organized together in a group, so sometimes they form unions. Unions help workers negotiate for better pay and job conditions. In late March 2020, union member Kwesi Ablordeppey alerted his union president that many people at the Soldiers' Home were dying. The union president alerted the MA Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders. On April 1, 2020, Governor Charlie Baker called for an independent investigation of the deaths at the Soldiers' Home. Kwesi and other union members have also advocated for new laws that will protect them as frontline workers.



He is also a member of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 888 and the president of his chapter.

Source: <https://www.wbur.org/commonhealth/2020/06/10/holyoke-soldiers-home-sudders-union-timeline>