

“I am an Emergency Medicine physician and Critical Care Fellow in Boston, Massachusetts. In the early days of the pandemic I worked in the Emergency Department on the front line, and watched the chaos of the unknown descend on an unprepared system. For these last weeks I have been in the ICU, treating those in need of the most care. For this, I have received the thanks of the media, strangers, hospital administration, and my peers.

Do not thank me -- thank my wife. My wife who is today 32 weeks pregnant with our first child. My wife who, while working from home to keep both her and our unborn child safe and unexposed, sees me off to work every day in the middle of a pandemic; to work at the hospital, where the virus is. My wife, who's excitement for the birth of our first child has turned into worry about me, herself, and the growing life inside of her. My wife who had big plans on how we would spend these final months together, but now sleeps alone in our bed, while I sleep in the guest room to keep her safe. My wife who, in her 3rd trimester, sleeps in the house alone while I work overnight at the hospital. Thank her. Without her, I could never be here.

Do not thank me -- thank my family. My parent's grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles who made my dreams of becoming a physician possible, and supported me every step of the way. Thank my parents and 84 year-old grandmother for their now sleepless nights, worrying about me working long hours with little rest. Thank them. Without them, I could never be here.

A decade of training has attempted to prepare me for being in this place at this time: in the front lines of an emerging infectious disease. I knew that this might happen. In my mind I prepared for it and played out countless scenarios. I visualized my worst-case situations, studied how to split ventilators when we might run out, and planned for the worst. I know the risks of exposure to air and blood pathogens, and studied how to protect myself and what risks were acceptable. I was prepared and accepted my risk. My loved ones did not. They did not sign up for this, to worry. For this, I cannot apologize enough. I have spent years of my life preparing for this possibility but never considered what I would be asking of them.

Behind every essential personal, pharmacist, nurse, doctor, janitor, respiratory therapist, tech, PA, NP is a legion of loved ones. Thank them. Thank my wife, thank my family, thank my brother and sister. Thank the family of every physician

you meet. They are the unseen army that waits at home while we labor in the twilight of the hospital. Without them, we could never be here caring for others, for you and your loved ones. They are our support, they care for us -- in person and in spirit.

My wife, I love you. While I know that it might seem so far away from where we now stand, this season will pass. This dark winter of worry and fear will break. The summer will come, the cold will thaw and we will soon welcome our child into a world that while changed, is also stronger, more loving, compassionate, and resilient. I see it already as I come home to you at dawn, the tulips breaking through the frost and spring birds chirping in the bare trees waiting to bloom. When the final tallies are counted and the last bed cleaned, know that it was you that got me through the darkness. Soon we will stand on the other side of history, and when the facts are studied and some will look to me; I will always look to you.”

Michael Sherman, MD, (MED'15)