



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Caring in the distance through your hands: A reflection on professional and personal networks in times of COVID-19[☆]



Cuidando desde la distancia a través de vuestras manos: una reflexión sobre las redes profesionales-personales en tiempos de COVID-19

Some time ago I left my care activity at the bedside in the critical care unit to develop my professional work in the area of teaching and research. However, despite this physical distance, emotionally I feel extremely near to my identity as an intensive care nurse and to care of the critically ill patient and his or her family.

Many nurses, colleagues, and friends with whom I have shared years of clinical, teaching and research experience have been involved in the development and consolidation of this strong identity. Thanks to all of them, I was able to move from that role of nurse trainee to expert (understanding this expertise as part of the development process and not as a result).

Together we have been creating professional networks that have helped us to continue training, to share learning resources, to generate new protocols and clinical practice guidelines to guide our care based on evidence, to research and investigate emerging problems, to make the professional image visible and to fight for professional development and disciplinary growth.¹

However, these networks, far from being exclusively professional, are also personal. If networks work, it is because there is a huge amount of communication, interpersonal relations, and shared experiences behind them. Because, above all, professional networks are human networks.²

During these months of health crisis, especially during the peak of the epidemiological curve and coinciding with the massive admission of COVID-19 patients in a critical situation to CCU, some families affected called me to ask if

I knew anyone who worked in any of the different CCUs to which their loved ones were admitted. They came to me as a resource and I quickly called on all of you, colleagues, who, despite your situation of work and emotional overload, extremely generously and willingly accepted the request for help. Thanks to our networks we have been able to connect patients with their families, we have been able to go beyond the walls of the CCU to reach homes where other majorly affected people were waiting to be cared for and accompanied.

From my current position at a desk I could feel how you gave me the opportunity to be there, at the bedside with our patients, with their families and with you, side by side, as if time and distance did not separate us. You do not know how much this helps me to find the sanity and strength to continue teaching on-line!

In the first week of May I shared the last remote tutorial with my fourth year Nursing Degree students, those who will soon take over from you, to create a space for reflection to guide them in the transition to professional life. I then decided to read them some excerpts from the best seller *The Friday Night Knitting Club*, by Kate Jacobs,³ in which the metaphor of knitting is used to explain life itself. I explained to them how crude my first stitches were at the beginning of my professional life, the number of different needles I had to try, the infinite new stitches I had to learn, the strenuous efforts I made to master complicated stitches, the importance of combining right and left stitches so that the inside of the fabric gives strength to the outside, etc. But I attach most importance to knitting with many hands, joining fragments of different wools, fabrics with different stitches and different needle thicknesses. Because blankets that are woven by many are the most beautiful, the warmest, the strongest and most resistant and those that provide the best cover.

This is my reading for today to learn from Covid: professional-personal networks and the contacts established through them are some of the most effective resources to improve patient care. Let us always remain connected to the goal of ensuring quality patient care.

References

1. Sherman RO, Cohn TM. Why your nursing networks matter. *Am Nurse Today*. 2008;13:9–11. Available at: <https://www.myamericannurse.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ant3-Networks-221.pdf> [accessed 20.05.20].

DOI of original article: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enfi.2020.06.001>

[☆] Please cite this article as: González-Gil MT. Cuidando desde la distancia a través de vuestras manos: una reflexión sobre las redes profesionales-personales en tiempos de COVID-19. *Enferm Intensiva*. 2020;31:157–158.

2. Jain AG, Renu G, d'Souza P, Shukri R. Personal and professional networking: a way forward in achieving quality nursing care. *Int J Nurs Educ.* 2011;3:1–3.
3. Jacobs K. *El Club de los Viernes. Ocho mujeres, ocho maneras de tejer la vida.* Madrid: Maeva Ediciones; 2009.

M.T. González-Gil (RN, PhD)

Sección Departamental de Enfermería, Facultad de Medicina, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Madrid, Spain
E-mail address: mariat.gonzalez@uam.es