

Access

Oral History Interview with Trey Hendrickson
Conducted by Joseph Keating on August 22, 2021

Joseph Keating [00:00:01] Right. Today is August 22nd, 2021. My name is Joseph Keating. I'm interviewing Trey Hendrickson - I always want to say remotely - in-person via audio. This interview is being conducted as a part of a project organized by the National Humanities Center in conjunction with the University of Washington. Our goal is to collect, preserve and share the stories and experiences of health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. All right, Trey. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and what you do professionally?

Trey Hendrickson [00:00:32] My name is Trey Hendrickson. I work as an ER [Emergency Room] nurse in Sundance, Wyoming. Graduated in April with my nursing degree. Registered nurse. Before that I worked as an EMT [Emergency Medical Technician] Basic as well as a LPN [Licensed Practical Nurse] and long-term care role and ER [Emergency Room] setting as well as the acute care setting.

Joseph Keating [00:00:56] Gotcha. So, what's a typical workday looks like for you the past couple of weeks?

Trey Hendrickson [00:01:02] A typical workday is a 12-hour workday. You know, like in detail or?

Joseph Keating [00:01:11] Sure.

Trey Hendrickson [00:01:12] So, I get here, clock in, go through the ER, make sure my ER is stocked, go through all of my patient charts, get report. See what kind of new orders there are in patient charts. Start out with my morning med pass after I've reviewed the charts and see if there's any new orders. Pretty much like a day-to-day basis. I mean, go through the day to check on the patients, assess them. Pretty much it goes into a full circle, you know, constantly assess your patients and make sure they're doing okay. Make sure the meds are on time. If there's any change in health then you contact the providers and let them know and keep up on plan care and get them better.

Joseph Keating [00:02:16] Gotcha. Gotcha. Did your day-to-day job change much before and after the pandemic?

Trey Hendrickson [00:02:22] I think really the only thing that changed was increase in protective equipment. I don't think my job changed very much at all other than having to keep a bigger supply of PPE [Personal Protective Equipment] and digging more into the airborne precautions setting rather than standard contact. Those kind of precautions, you know. So, and then making sure that we kept our other patients safe as well as the other staff.

Joseph Keating [00:03:12] Right. Yeah, definitely. Do you remember the first activity or event that you were a part of that was different because of COVID?

Trey Hendrickson [00:03:20] Say that again.

Joseph Keating [00:03:23] Do you remember the first activity or event you went to that was different because of COVID? Like, for example, online school or something that would have been in-person but was on Zoom or there were restrictions. Something like that.

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Trey Hendrickson [00:03:35] Yeah. I'd have to say school. I was actually during my second semester of nursing school. Went on to spring break and then they added a week on to spring break. And then we went to online school and Zoom and then they added another week on to our spring break, so. And then we were still able to finish that semester at the same time but it took me six months to sit in for my boards when it should of took two months or, you know, to get into the testing centers. But due to COVID, they weren't accepting as many applicants. So, they pushed back a lot of the LPNs.

Joseph Keating [00:04:37] Gotcha. Do you feel like the pandemic may have impacted your education in any other ways?

Trey Hendrickson [00:04:44] Yes, I definitely think that the pandemic has affected my education. It cut out a lot of our in-person clinical time. I think we've lost - my class anyway - we lost probably a good I'd say 100 to 120 hours of clinical time just from missing the last six weeks of school, you know. So, I think that's definitely greatly decreased our educational abilities.

Joseph Keating [00:05:23] Yeah. Definitely. Did your relationship with your coworkers in, like the hospital setting change as a result of the pandemic, during the pandemic?

Trey Hendrickson [00:05:35] Yeah, definitely. Yeah, we were a pretty tight knit group before the pandemic, but I think going through the pandemic, I feel like that we've a lot greater, stronger bond with each other just because of the things that we faced together. You know, wearing a mask for 12 hours a day. Gowning up 12 hours a day, sweating your ass off 12 hours in the day, you know, and then not having enough staff to cover a night shift because they're out because they have COVID. So, then you got to sleep in the hospital and so you go 96, 120 hours straight sleeping at the hospital and then back at it the next day, you know. You get a lot greater bond together.

Joseph Keating [00:06:38] Definitely. Definitely.

Trey Hendrickson [00:06:40] Definitely reminds me of my military days.

Joseph Keating [00:06:43] Does it?

Trey Hendrickson [00:06:44] Yeah. Yeah, it did.

Joseph Keating [00:06:46] Do you feel like the pandemic changed your relationship with your patients?

Trey Hendrickson [00:06:54] That's a tricky question there. I think it did change not necessarily between myself and my patients but patients and health care providers as a whole. I think it's definitely changed the outlook between the two. The patients nowadays are definitely a lot more informed than before the pandemic. But as far as between my patients and me, I feel that it's changed in the fact that wearing a mask while going in to greet them has defaced me as a health care professional. I'm not able to connect one-on-one with them anymore. I'm not able to get that face-to-face time and show them the emotional support that they need. You know, a lot of emotional support comes from - what is it - nonverbal gestures or facial expressions or, you know, so there's a lot of stuff that's

missed there. In that fact it's definitely changed the relationship between health care professional and patient.

Joseph Keating [00:08:45] Definitely. And has that been difficult for you to deal with emotionally these last 18 months?

Trey Hendrickson [00:08:50] It has. It has. I think for me, more of the fact that I like to connect with my patients on a personal level, I like to get to know them. You know, I have, whether it's two days, three days, four hours with them. I like to connect with them and show them that I care. So, yeah, it's affected me a lot emotionally.

Joseph Keating [00:09:19] Definitely. Do you feel like you've been, and we can certainly omit this question if you're not comfortable answering it, but you feel like you've been adequately supported by your institution?

Trey Hendrickson [00:09:26] Definitely not.

Joseph Keating [00:09:27] Do you mind describing more details about how?

Trey Hendrickson [00:09:30] Well, for one, not only the institution, I feel like the government as a whole. Not only our institution, but I don't feel like the health care profession has gotten the help that they need finding staff to take positions, having an aggressive recruiting, taking care of the staff that are here, retention programs. I don't feel like we've been supported that way. I feel like that there could be a lot better staff retention is probably the greatest. We've lost a lot of good staff due to not being supportive.

Joseph Keating [00:10:46] Gotcha. Are there any stories or moments that you've shared with patients that stick out to you over the last 18 months?

Trey Hendrickson [00:11:12] Moments or stories. Well, I shared with one of my patients they were they're pretty strung out about having to quarantine for two weeks. And me being a cancer survivor, I had to share with them that January of 2018 I was going through radiation and had to quarantine for four weeks, two months. So, I was able to share with them my experience of quarantining before the COVID quarantining came in. And just kind of my experiences of having quarantine and knowing the struggles that they go through, not being able to see loved ones, even though they're in the next room or two houses down the street or, you know. It was a good bonding experience knowing that I was able to share something with them.

Joseph Keating [00:12:41] So, most of the people that I've talked to have had a pretty strong opinion one way or the other about the term health care heroes and how it's been used during the pandemic to describe doctors, nurses, EMS, just about everybody. How do you feel about that?

Trey Hendrickson [00:12:56] I hate it.

Joseph Keating [00:12:57] Why?

Trey Hendrickson [00:12:57] I'm not a hero. I'm a person who does their job, loves what they do. I am not considered a hero. Being a military man, I see those that have have died

for what I'm able to do today. Those are the heroes. I'm able to be free and live my life and take care of the patients that I can take care of because of that. Being a hero is something - giving your life for something greater than yourself. So, for me, I think being called a hero is - it defaces those that have actually done something for.

Joseph Keating [00:14:05] Yeah, absolutely. I respect that answer a lot. Are there any other like major events that stick out to you during the pandemic, whether that's in your own personal life or you just recall from bigger things like national media or anything like that?

Trey Hendrickson [00:14:30] Bigger events that stand out?

Joseph Keating [00:14:32] Yeah, like just events during the pandemic that when people ask you about COVID in 40 years, you'll remember.

Trey Hendrickson [00:14:48] Well, there's definitely a lot that's happened in this last year-and-a-half or two years. I think the greatest thing that stands out to me would be knowing that history repeats itself. Not even the fact that about COVID, but how America has changed even since I was a little kid growing up. You know, it's changed a lot and I feel like COVID is definitely adding fuel to the fire. It's not as bad as it was in the Civil War. Is it getting there? It's leaning that way. The one thing that gets me riled up the most when I hear COVID is the attack on the White House. January 6th. It's real, real close to home to me because seeing people that claim to be conservatives defacing our national symbols, defacing our national emblems. Something that I've fought for, bleed for, my brothers have died for, you know, it's something that I will forever.

Joseph Keating [00:17:07] Are there any changes to health care that you foresee from the pandemic over the next five or 10 years, like changes that are going to stick, you think?

Trey Hendrickson [00:17:17] Oh, most definitely. I think probably the biggest - the one thing that's going to stick the most is precautions. Precautions, precautions, precautions. I know they always hit on safety. Always, always hit on safety. Always have hit on safety. But I think it's going to be enforced a lot harder, a lot stronger is making sure you keep your precautions, safety precautions whether it's contact, standard airborne. It's going to be enforced a lot more.

Joseph Keating [00:18:07] Gotcha. If you mind sharing, have you received your vaccine?

Trey Hendrickson [00:18:15] No.

Joseph Keating [00:18:15] No. What went into your decision for that?

Trey Hendrickson [00:18:21] Well, I have done research. I've done my own research. I've looked into Pfizer's studies, went on to the website, looked into their studies, what went into their vaccines. I looked up Moderna. I went to their website and researched their vaccines. I visited with scientists that develop vaccines. My great uncle was actually one of them. Visited with him about it, interviewed him, what he thought about them. I went on to Johnson & Johnson's website and researched theirs. I also went on to CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention], NIH [National Institutes of Health]. You know, I've done a

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lot of my own research on masks, what they entail, do they work, do they not work. Vaccines, do they work, do they not work. Yeah. Even down to the vaccine type whether it's mRNA, dead virus, live virus. As far as the corona virus, SARS-CoV-2, whatever. I don't - they've studied on it since 2002. Well, there's a lot of studies that went into it. I don't feel like it is right for me to get at this point. The mRNA research is still early. That's why I haven't looked into the Moderna vaccine. Johnson & Johnson had a lot of adverse reactions that maybe shouldn't be a part of vaccines and the fact that I'm a cancer survivor, I guess I've opted not to.

Joseph Keating [00:20:46] Yeah. Yeah. Thank you for sharing. Absolutely. So, if you were to go back and visit your pre-pandemic self, is there any advice that you would give?

Trey Hendrickson [00:21:17] No, I don't think that there would be any one advice that I would give to myself. I feel like all the events that leading up to today are meant to be, how they're supposed to be. I don't think that I would be able to prepare myself any better than I have. You know, being a military man, going through the nuclear, chemical, biological warfare training, learning about biological warfare, knowing about biological warfare. They don't classify COVID-19 as a biological warfare. Does it meet a lot of the criteria? Yes, it does meet a lot of the criteria for biological warfare, but I don't think that I'd be able to better prepare myself.

Joseph Keating [00:22:35] Gotcha. Gotcha. Are there any other thoughts or reflections that you'd like to share that we didn't cover in the interview?

Trey Hendrickson [00:22:48] No. I don't think so.

Joseph Keating [00:22:49] Great. Yeah, I'll stop.