

Logan Manor Community Health Systems

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Logan is a small town in Phillips County in North Western Kansas. The population of the town is around 550 people and the population in the entire county is a little over 5,000. At the start of the pandemic our facility took all the necessary precautions. We locked our doors and prevented family members from visiting. All of our staff wore masks through the facility. We screened staff upon entrance to the facility daily and multiple times a shift. Anyone who had any symptoms was sent home for the day and sent to the health department to get tested. If an employee traveled to a hot spot or went to an event that had a large group of people they were not allowed to work for 14 days after the event they attended. The policies and procedures were in place we were prepared to face an outbreak or so we thought.

Our residents were having an increase in sadness and depression since their families were only able to communicate through closed windows or using technology to facetime or zoom. Our facility did all we could to keep them in contact but there is nothing that can replace a hug or a kiss from the person you have been married to for 60 years. We saw family members and residents crying because they could not attend birthday parties, weddings and other family events. We stopped allowing our residents to dine together and interact like normal. We took the facility that we have worked so hard to make into a home and caused it to be more of a prison. Our staff did an amazing job trying their best to fill the gaps with creative activities and ways to still interact with families. We care for the residents like family but there is just nothing we could do to completely fill the void.

Back at the end of June our county had a total of 2 people who had recovered from cases of COVID 19. Our nursing home had been working hard to keep the virus out of our facility. The attitude in the county overall was that COVID 19 would not come to our area, "it's a big city problem". Healthcare facilities continued to prepare for the worst and expected the virus to get to our area at some point.

On the morning of Sunday June 28th I received a call at home that several residents were not acting like themselves. There was a total of 8 residents who had varying symptoms of COVID 19. Not all residents had the same symptoms, 3 had fevers and body aches, 2 had diarrhea, 3 were just not acting like themselves and had altered baseline of behaviors. The director of nursing and myself immediately came to the building and placed the residents in isolation. I then needed to contact the doctors for each resident to get orders to test them for COVID 19. We do not have a hospital in Logan and we are located right in the middle of Norton and Phillipsburg which are the hospitals closest to us and our residents' doctor at both hospitals. This was a weekend and we were not able to get ahold of the providers. We struggled with one of the hospitals to even allow us to test the residents as the provider on call was positive that we had food poisoning not an outbreak of COVID 19. After many calls it was lined up to have the Health department come and use KDHE to test our 8 symptomatic residents the next day. The

swabs were done first thing Monday morning and sent off to the lab. We continued to monitor our staff and residents through the next couple days. Test results arrived back on Wednesday July 1st confirming that 7 of the 8 residents were COVID positive.

This was our worst nightmare coming to life. We then got the health department back and had the remaining residents and staff members swabbed for COVID 19. These swabs were the nasopharyngeal swabs and they were horrible to put our residents with dementia through the swabbing process. We also happened to be having our infection control KDADs survey on this day and they were very impatient with us and added to the stress of the day. We did not have a great supply of PPE on hand since it had been in short supply. We had tried to order several times and struggled with getting any supplies in. The N95 masks that we had were like gold and we were forced to reuse them until they were visibly soiled or falling apart. We were very fortunate that our Emergency Operations Coalition in Phillips County was able to get some PPE supplies and they delivered a pickup load to us the day that we received our first positive results. We still had to use washable gowns in our non-covid areas of the building and each staff member had 2 N95 masks that we stored in paper bags and rotated each day.

We got our full round of results back on the 3rd of July and 8 staff members and 11 additional residents tested positive for COVID 19. We now had to make an entire hall specifically for COVID 19 instead of a partial hall. We had to move almost everyone in the building to accomplish this. We were short staffed and working on little or no sleep to get this done after calling in all the staff that we could. We had to adjust scheduling to ensure that we kept adequate staffing on the COVID 19 hall with the influx of positive cases. All staff worked so hard to help get us through the outbreak. The hardest part was staffing. We had a couple staff members quit on the spot once they heard that we had COVID in the building. We had staff members working over 80 hours a week to ensure that our residents were cared for. We had office staff working as cooks, housekeepers and dish aides. Staff was getting tired and worn out but they have hearts of gold and wanted to continue to care for our residents. Local staffing agencies were not willing to send anyone into our facility as they had not worked with COVID 19 previously. Staffing agencies that were located across the state or country would not be able to provide any staff for 3-4 weeks. Local nurses and CNAs who worked at other facilities in the county were willing to come help but their primary employers would not allow them to return to work if they came to help at our facility. We not only had to provide normal levels of staffing while working with many staff members off but we had to double the number of nurses working on the floor. Our facility typically has one charge nurse on staff at all times for our 36 residents but with one COVID 19 wing and one non-covid wing we had to have a nurse for each hall.

We continued to test all staff and all residents on a weekly basis. After the first 2 weeks of testing we had to find an alternative lab as KDHE would only support 2 weeks of testing. The lab that we went with was out of Wichita and they promised a 48-hour turn around time. The first week the results were back in 3 days and the second week it took over 10 days to get results back. We were wasting our time and money with the lab out of Wichita and were able to find another lab on the recommendation of Roger Marshall. The lab in Kansas City was able to get us consistent results in less than 48 hours which helped. By the end of the outbreak which lasted 6 weeks we had a total of 21 residents who tested positive and 17 staff members.

COVID 19 was different in each person it hit some of our residents hard while others had light cases with minor or no complaints. It was a struggle to work with the local hospitals because they had not treated

anyone with COVID 19 up to this point in time and they did not want to have any patients in the hospitals. We were basically told that if we wanted to send our residents on for care they would see them in the ER and fly them onto a higher level of care only if they were going to allow a ventilator to be placed. The hospitals and providers were not prepared to help us care for and treat the residents in the best manor possible. We lost 8 residents within a couple weeks in July and it was the hardest thing I have ever had to watch. We did not get to hug them goodbye, we weren't able to attend their funerals or hug their family members. As a small facility we are close with the residents and it broke all of our hearts to have to say goodbye to our loved ones by placing them into a body bag and spraying them down with disinfectant before we could have the morgue take the body out of the building. Our staff and residents were all scared. The residents watched as others passed away and were scared to death each week as we tested, afraid of what their fate would be.

The staff members were hit almost as hard and it became a rapid reality to staff members when 2 of our own staff were hospitalized with COVID 19. My heart broke for the 29-year-old mother of 3 who was working as hard as she could for our residents only to contract the virus. She called me in tears a few days after the onset of symptoms saying she was short of breath and not feeling well at all and asking if she should go to the hospital. I watched her go to the ER two days in a row and get sent on to a larger hospital in Hays to be monitored closely. Luckily she was not severe enough to be placed on a ventilator but she scared me so much and it made me realize how scary COVID was for everyone not just the elderly and frail population.

We reached out for help from our senators and aside from encouraging words there was not much that was done to help us. They were unable to help with staffing, unable to send PPE and unable to help get us point of care testing supplies. I was disappointed with how little we were helped when it felt like we were drowning and unable to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

While we did not get support from state representatives we did have an amazing support system that was the community. Through the outbreak the support and love that we felt from the community was amazing. There was not a mealtime that we did not have hot meals delivered for over a month. Our dining room was full of snacks and coolers of drinks. Cards from friends and family helped to lift our spirits and messages of hope and gratitude kept us coming to work everyday to do what we are here for. The community built us up and did all they could to help us through the outbreak. We are blessed to live in a town that brings us up instead of tearing us down during the hard times.

We were able to return to our new normal in the middle of August after 2 weeks of testing with no new positive tests. We also finally were able to get in house point of care testing that we could do in house as often as needed by the end of September. The in house testing has been great and has helped us to catch 3 additional staff members as soon as they were positive to prevent the spread of COVID 19 back to our residents.

Our staff was having a hard time dealing with the loss of 8 loved members of our facility. We reached out and were able to get grief counselors in for a group and private sessions. Talking through what we had been through helped our staff to work through their grief and sadness. We also had a pastor come in to talk to our staff and help them work through feelings. There was so much anger, guilt, and pain that I don't know if we will ever be able to fully recover as the scars on our hearts are forever.

Since March we have watched our residents decline not just because of catching COVID 19 and fighting a virus but from being isolated and unable to get out of our facility to see friends and families. Failure to thrive is happening through the facility and until we can open back up and return to normal I don't think we are going to see this getting better. We have a higher rate of depression, decreased appetites because you must eat meals alone in a room instead of a dining room full of people. Since March we have been able to allow indoor visits for one week only. After our outbreak was resolved the county positivity rate started increasing and has not been at a level that has allowed visits to happen safely. We continually see so many people in the county refusing to wear masks and worrying about themselves instead of what they could be doing for others. We need to do better as a state not just for ourselves but for those who are living in nursing homes. Did we ask them if they wanted to lock the building down and not allow visitors in? No we were told that it was what was going to be done. Their choices were taken away as we were mandated to do what is best for them, let's do what is best for them now. Let's bring the COVID 19 vaccines into nursing homes as soon as possible to help protect not only the residents but the staff who is working hard as well. We are hopeful that the vaccines that come to Kansas are going to be made available to nursing home staff and residents as a high priority.

As a nursing home administrator this past year is the hardest thing I have ever gone through. I am still here caring for the aging population because I have a passion for caring for them through the best years of their lives. I have broken down and cried more in the last months than I thought was possible. We are doing our best with the hand we have been dealt but are sincerely asking for help to get what is needed to continue to provide care and protect our residents.