Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds publicly acknowledged community spread in the state of COVID-19 on March 14, initiating extraordinary efforts by MercyOne colleagues to care for patients, and prepare for a potential surge.

Caring for our most critical patients
In just two days’ time, the post-anesthesia care unit (PACU) at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center was converted to create a dedicated critical care unit for COVID-19 positive patients.

The space has a capacity to serve 18 patients, with two negative air flow rooms available for use during aerosol generating procedures. The unit’s open concept layout has proven advantageous, with care teams able to easily monitor all patients at once, and move from patient room to patient room without having to don and doff personal protective equipment (PPE) – saving time and supplies.

“The transformation was a true collaboration with our critical care and PACU colleagues and providers, Anesthesia, Clinical Informatics, Facilities, Maintenance, Environmental Services and others, working to innovate and improve daily,” said Julie Tuel, market director of Critical Care Services.

Being ONE to serve: patient care in the time of COVID-19

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“The way in which our staff stepped up is phenomenal, volunteering to support our most acute COVID-19 patients.”

Critical Care Services leaders – Julie Tuel, Dr. Bryon Johnson and Dr. Brad Wilcox – collect and integrate input from staff on the setup and operations of the unit. Daily calls are held with colleagues who provide care at the bedside to answer questions, address needs and keep everyone up-to-date.

Last week, all consultants began virtual rounding in the unit using Zoom, reducing possible health care provider exposure and PPE use. This same technology is now also being used to connect patients with their loved ones.

Delivering personalized care through innovation
In preparation for an increase in patients admitted to the hospital, colleagues transformed floors 7N and 3S at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center to treat persons under investigation (PUI) and COVID-19 positive patients. Within 24 hours of the decision to reallocate the floors, supplies were stocked, PPE delivered and processes were in place to care for patients facing the virus.
Donate plasma, save lives

MercyOne Central Iowa and LifeServe Blood Center of Iowa have partnered to collect and deliver convalescent plasma product to help treat critically ill patients. COVID-19 convalescent plasma (CCP) is the portion of blood rich in antibodies used to treat or prevent serious infection with SARS CoV 2, which causes COVID-19. Patients who have recovered from COVID-19 will produce specific antibodies that can save lives of patients who now have COVID-19 and are critically ill. Although research on the use of CCP continues, there is initial evidence it may help.

"While still an investigative treatment for COVID-19 patients, results of initial trials are promising for the effectiveness of using plasma of fully recovered COVID-19 patients for those with serious or life-threatening cases of the illness," said Dr. Aneesa Afroze, director of Antibiotic Stewardship at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center. "Those who have successfully recovered from COVID-19 can help provide treatment to current and future COVID-10 patients by donating plasma."

For more information on donating CCP, visit lifeservebloodcenter.org.

Being ONE to serve

Continued from first page

"Navigating the recommended processes was one of the most challenging aspects. Initially, new guidance came about almost daily," said Allison Moses, director, 7N - Telemetry. "However, our team is resilient and experienced in caring for the very sick, including patients experiencing serious respiratory concerns. Without hesitation, colleagues volunteered to help."

Education and training was, and continues to be, key. Colleagues from various departments who provide patient-facing care are supporting one another, with strategies in place to limit the number of staff going in and out of patient rooms.

In addition, MercyOne has deployed virtual care, including a clinician stationed remotely within the hospital. Through two-way video technology, the clinician is able to communicate with the patient, family and the multidisciplinary care team.

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The clinician, currently a registered nurse, is able to offer expertise and support to bedside staff, as well as oversee the plan of care through team collaboration - ultimately, improving outcomes.

“We have been exploring the use of a virtual care for several months – even before COVID-19 was on our radar," said Alison Bruckner, administrative director of Acute Care. "This innovative approach offers many benefits for all involved, with the most important being improved patient experience and team engagement. What we learn from the work we’re doing today will continue to help drive innovation in health care well into the future."
Nutrition Services continues to support patients and colleagues, offering grocery and personal care items for sale in the cafeterias. At MercyOne West Des Moines Medical Center, new meal service order/pick-up options are now available, as well as sandwiches and salads in a new market fresh vending machine. To ensure safety, Nutrition Services also began prepackaging food items and revising room service delivery protocols.

MercyOne Emergency Care share, “the reason we walk this hall to the frontline” by adding a heart to the wall after huddles each day, with the names of those for whom they walk the frontline. (Cheryl Bowman, patient account rep, pictured)

Care packages were provided by Jeff and Laura Reed, owners of AR Workshop in Ankeny, to show appreciation for MercyOne health care workers. Each package included prepackaged snacks. In all, 70 packages were delivered with nursing units and other essential colleagues.

Throughout this difficult time, Pastoral Care colleagues have continued to provide comfort and guidance. Deacon Dave O’Brien (pictured) administers Communion to a patient at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center.

In addition to the COVID-19 Response Fund, MercyOne Des Moines Foundation is working with donors of in-kind gifts, such as gift cards to restaurants. Blaze Pizza recently surprised several units, including these colleagues from 7N at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center.