

Covid 19: Taken Seriously Early On

By

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Just when Covid 19 was becoming a household name, we received notification in mid-February, 2020, that my husband's nephew, Larry, a man in his mid-50's, was ill at home with Covid 19. Larry lives in Maryland, and his dad, my husband's brother, lives in Homer, NY. Larry became more ill at home, was not improving, and had to be admitted to the hospital ICU on April 2nd. He had a difficult struggle with Covid 19. Larry was on a ventilator for 10 weeks. He had many complications, including developing pneumonia, increased fluid in his lungs, and had to have a chest tube inserted. There were complications from the TPN feedings, and he had to have a gastrostomy tube inserted for feedings.

Larry then developed kidney failure. He had to have dialysis three times. Larry's older brother, Bill, kept close contact with Larry's medical personnel; he was the liaison for the whole extended family. Bill gave us updates every two or three days, and sometimes daily, when Larry was the most critical. There were many times we did not think he was going to live for another day. From the hospital, Larry was finally transferred to an extended care facility for rehabilitation. There he exhibited some weakness on one side, and they felt that perhaps he had also had a slight stroke while he was ventilated. His rehabilitation was lengthy, but he was finally able to be discharged home on December 22, 2020. Almost nine full months after he was first hospitalized for Covid 19!!

The first case of Covid 19 in the state of New York was confirmed on March 1, 2020. By April 4th, there were 12,274 new cases in New York State. By April 10, New York had more confirmed cases than any country outside the United States. There were 29,000 more deaths in New York in April 2020 than in the previous April of 2019.

Personally knowing someone who was so seriously ill with Covid 19, made our family take this disease seriously. We wore our masks, kept our social distancing, and pretty much stayed at home as much as possible. It was excruciating not being able to see our grandchildren. It would anger us when we saw people without masks, especially on TV, gathering in large crowds, against the recommendations of health officials.

We would hear local people saying it was just a hoax, a way of seeing how much they can control people in the United States. Our lives were touched by Covid 19 in December. Our daughter, who works at Walmart, became ill with fever, vomiting, stomach pains and diarrhea. She was physically ill for about a day. When she went to return to work, she did not pass the employee screening, and had to be tested for Covid. She tested positive. We tried to keep her separated from the rest of the family, separate bathroom, separate living room, eating apart, social distancing and masks within the house. Constantly cleaning surfaces with disinfectant.

I developed a slight rash on my neck and near my arm pits and a bit on my stomach. I had worn a new blouse, and thought it was a reaction to something in the new material. I emailed my physician for recommendations on treating the rash, as Benadryl and ointment were not helping. She told me that a rash can be a symptom of Covid 19. She told me to get tested. My husband Steve and I were tested. I tested positive for Covid 19, and Steve tested negative. We were all on quarantine.

I was very worried about Steve getting Covid 19. He has a history of pneumonia a few times and also had a pulmonary embolism last January, and he is 76 years old. I slept in separate rooms, used separate bathrooms, ate in different rooms, and social distanced, wore a mask. At night I could not sleep for worry that Steve would get covid and get very ill and die. I was nearly frantic with worry!!

My initial quarantine ended December 23. Candy had already returned to work a couple days prior to that. Steve works part time on a farm, and his boss wanted him to be retested for Covid before he returned to work on the farm, so he was retested on December 23rd. Of course, we could not have Christmas with the family or grandchildren. Our oldest daughter and her husband, who live in Roanoke, Virginia, did not travel to New York for Christmas.

Candy did have Christmas off from Walmart, so we were planning a day to celebrate the best we could with the three of us. On Christmas morning, Steve received a phone call from the Cortland County Health Department. He had tested positive for Covid 19! I was devastated. I blamed myself for his illness. I watched him like a hawk for the next few days. Every little sneeze or cough caused me to literally startle.

We were so extremely lucky! Steve never actually developed any symptoms, except maybe some fatigue. As the days passed without the development of symptoms in Steve, I began to relax a bit, allowing myself to believe that he was actually going to have a mild case.

By January 6, 2021, we were off isolation and quarantine!! We finally had a family Christmas with our son , Ethan, and his family on Saturday, January 9th! What a wonderfully fun event to finally get to see our grandchildren!

As I write this on March 30th, 2021, the up-to-date statistics for Cortland County are: 4,017 confirmed cases of Covid 19. That is NOT including SUNY Cortland numbers. The college had 781 cases last semester and has had 397 cases since January 16, 2021. We have had 62 deaths in our county, 39 of them were nursing home deaths. Since the pandemic began, we have had 186 hospitalized with covid.

The three of us here have been vaccinated against Covid 19. Steve has had two shots, I get my second shot on April first, and Candy gets her second shot on April 21. I would encourage everyone to get vaccinated to help stop this pandemic from worsening or resurging.

Throughout much of the covid shut down I struggled with feeling depressed and forlorn, and lonely. I developed some techniques for dealing with that, but that is another covid story. Please take this epidemic seriously! It is not over yet!