

Case Study – Moral Distress and Hospital Workers



By Ryan Pferdehirt, D.Bioethics, HEC-C

February 2021

Moral Distress Bioethics Case Study

Jennifer is an ICU nurse, having worked for Pleasantville Medical Center for 20 years. Currently, she says she is taking Covid-19 hard. She has confided to friends and fellow hospital staff that she feels she is carrying a large burden. Covid has impacted her relationships with her husband and children, as well as her extended family. But mostly, it is impacting her as a nurse. She feels that she is not able to do what she was trained to do. She says that “patients that come here with Covid just don’t recover. What are we doing for them? We are just watching them as they slowly die and die alone.”

When a new patient arrives in the ICU who she is to take on, she says, “I can’t do it. I can’t go in there and handle another one.” A fellow nurse, and friend, reached out to ethics to see if there is anything that can be done.