The healthcare heroes at Mount Sinai Hospital on Chicago's West Side are used to the hectic pace of care that comes with being a Level 1 trauma center. A steady flow patients with all sorts of emergencies—from gunshot wounds to heart attacks—is the norm.

Then came the virus that took over the world.

"We're definitely vacillating between moments of chaos and calm," nurse Kimberly Lipetzky told the Chicago Sun-Times. "Overall, there's this heaviness, this weight in the air when you're wondering, what's going to come in the door?"

The hospital's first COVID-19 patient was diagnosed on March 23. Since then, the patients kept coming and coming—filling the medical ICU, surgical ICU and even the trauma ICU.

"I've been a disaster nurse for 25 years. I never thought I'd see this," said Michele Mazurek, chief nursing officer at Sinai Chicago. "We're seeing hardened nurses having a rough time."

Among nurses and physicians, the virus has brought fear of getting sick from patients and the new, more arduous process of getting in and out of personal protective equipment (PPE). But it has also highlighted the dedication of caregivers across the system at Mount Sinai Hospital, Holy Cross Hospital and Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital.

Changing PPE takes about three minutes, so shaving off seconds is critical in an emergency. Staff who aren't clinicians are stepping in to help, showing that healthcare heroes are everywhere in the hospital.

"You have unit secretaries coming out from behind their desks, putting PPEs on, making sure gowns were tied," Mazurek said. "This is a group effort. We did not need to ask any of these individuals to do what they're doing."

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