

**SUPSI**

# Taking care of nurses during the COVID 19 emergency in Canton Tessin

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**2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference – Effective measures to keep our treasures – How to care for health professionals**  
**29th – 30th April 2021**

# Background (1)

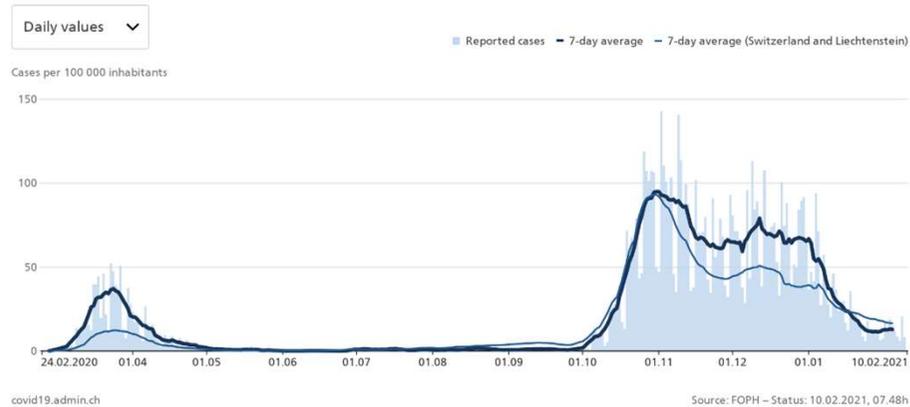
## Development over time

### Laboratory-confirmed cases, Ticino, 24.02.2020 to 10.02.2021, per 100 000 inhabitants

The graphic shows the development of laboratory-confirmed cases for the selected time frame.

Daily values: The line represents the 7-day rolling average (average of the previous 3 days to subsequent 3 days). 14-day values: The Line represents the sum of the last 14 days as the incidence (cases per 100 000 inhabitants) or as an absolute number. Total: The line represents the total of all cases for the selected time frame.

The published data is based on information submitted by laboratories, doctors and hospitals. It refers to the new reports we received and reviewed. The figures might therefore deviate from those communicated by the cantons.



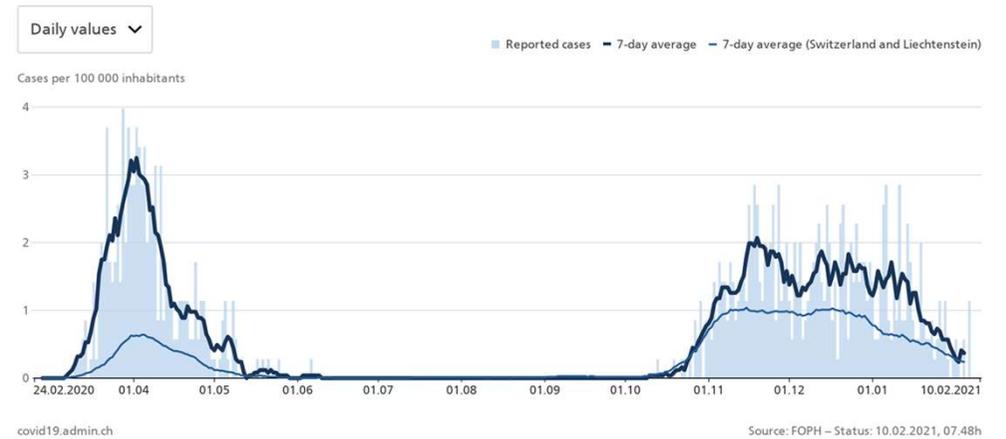
## Development over time

### Laboratory-confirmed deaths, Ticino, 24.02.2020 to 10.02.2021, per 100 000 inhabitants

The graphic shows the development of deaths for the selected time frame.

The line represents the 7-day rolling average (average of previous 3 to subsequent 3 days).

People who have died with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection. For this statistic the date of death is decisive.



## Background (2)

ICN Call to Action

COVID-19



SUPSI



DIE SPITÄLER DER SCHWEIZ  
LES HÔPITAUX DE SUISSE  
GLI OSPEDALI SVIZZERI



Verband Schweizerischer Assistenz- und Oberärztinnen und -ärzte  
Association suisse des médecins-assistant(e)s et chef(f)es de clinique  
Associazione svizzera dei medici assistenti e capiclinica

Scheda informativa COVID-19

(versione aggiornata del 16 dicembre 2020)

## «Siamo stati le mani e lo sguardo dei familiari negli ultimi istanti»

**LA RICORRENZA** / Oggi è la giornata internazionale dell'infermiere, una categoria troppo spesso invisibile - In Svizzera il 46% lascia prematuramente questa professione

CdT12.05.20

CANTONE

29.11.2020 - 10:00 | LETTO 18'489

AGGIORNAMENTO : 12:57

## Infermieri col Covid-19: l'EOC corre ai ripari

Circa 380 dipendenti dell'Ente sono a casa in isolamento o in quarantena. Assunto personale avventizio



di Patrick Stopper  
Giornalista

Tio online



## Background (3)



# Background (4)



## Research question / aims

- ❖ How do nurses recount their experiences lived in the first month of the COVID 19 emergency?
- ❖ What are the themes and the elements that characterize their story?



## Method

- ❖ Qualitative retrospective study

- ❖ Data collection:

- narrative inquiry with spontaneously written narratives of the lived experience (Hurwitz et al., 2004; Bleakley (2005)).

- ❖ Data analysis:

- A thematic analysis approach (Braun, V., & Clarke, V. 2012).

# Results

❖ 20 narratives

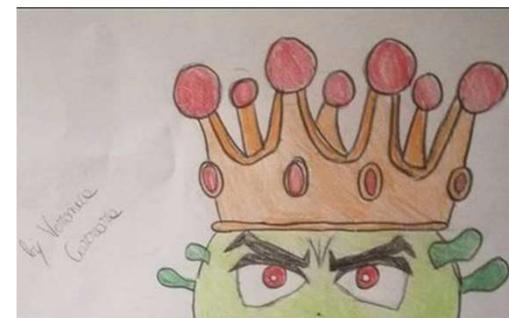
❖ 26 themes  
grouped  
in 6 macro-  
themes

Macro-themes	The Pandemic	What changed	Communication	Emotions and lived experience	Role and image	Interprofessional Collaboration
Themes	Virus	Changes in general/routine	Aspects related to communication	Emotions	Image/nurse's role	Interprofessional collaboration
	Infection	Changes in management	Narrative	Proud of	APN role	
	Emergency-war	Changes in the team		When it's all over	Leader role	
	What is happening far away from us	Changes in care		Ethical dilemmas		
		Changes due to more knowledge		Relationship with death		
		Changes in the family		Lived experience		
		Changes in ties		Physical signs		
				Support to / from colleagues		
				Support from the population		

## Results (2) – Macrotheme: The Pandemic

### Representation of the virus

*“Covid-19, I met you in January in other guises. You presented yourself fatally at the other end of the world, displaying all your grandeur and arrogance, just as the cruelest monarchs did back in the day. It is not by chance that the first name given to you was that of crown.” (Nurse 1)*



### The situation faced by professionals

*“The most surprising thing was when I asked who would want to go on the frontline..., as we call it....the frontline ... because for us it is a war, war against an invisible enemy that not only kills but takes away affections, kills memories. (Nurse 4)*

## Results (3) – Macrotheme: The Pandemic

Their experiences when they came into contact with it and were infected.

*“I thought I was invincible, just because I'm 25 years old and I'm not considered a 'risk category' and that I can help everyone...*

*but it's when you 'sit' on your stoic thoughts that you fall to the ground... In fact, last night the coughing attacks started [...]*

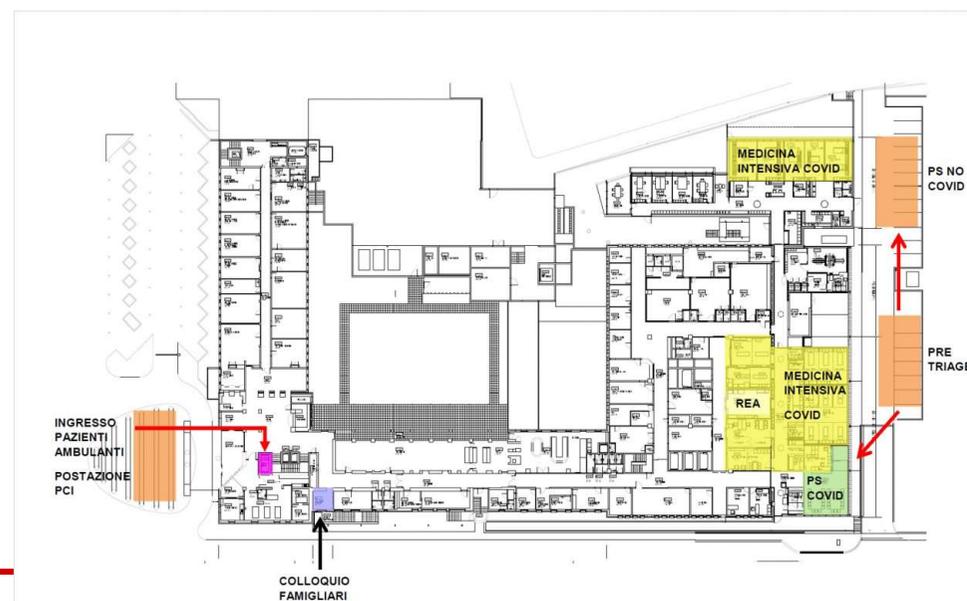
*for 10 minutes I coughed continuously without stopping, with gags of vomiting from exertion...*

*[...] I was torn, I was going from one thought to another like: 'where could I have caught it? And above all ... who could I have infected?' ... because you can be contagious even when you are asymptomatic!” (Nurse 6)*

## Results (4) – Macrotheme: What changes

The organization also changed

*“Wards and services that no longer exist but have been replaced by wards for Covid patients waiting for a destination, old intensive care units that have been reborn as new, oxygen connections found in the most remote places, offices transformed into bedrooms, bars and kiosks into emergency rooms where processes are streamlined and aligned without too much difficulty and reticence.” (Nurse 7)*



La Regione 13.03.2020

## Results 5 – Macrotheme: What changes

The changes that inevitably affected the family and its ties:

*“Personally, since the hospital became Covid, I have made the decision not to visit my parents anymore.*

*I say hello from the window but I don't go home anymore.*

*This too is a strange thing, something that this disease has taken away from us.” (Nurse 9)*



## Results 6 – Macrotheme: Communication

The communication has also been affected by this situation in different ways at the level of the various contexts and actors:

*“A word, a confidence, a whisper, a kiss, a hug... how much I took these things for granted! And how melancholic I feel now that I no longer have them! [...] Now, in order to make myself understood by others, I have to use twice as much energy: and many attempts have also proved futile.” (Nurse 2)*

*“You learn to know your colleagues by their eyes, to stop and talk because you can't read their lips, and to observe more. I think that until today I had never really understood how much people's eyes can talk. In the rare moments when people removed their masks, you discovered faces you had never seen before, as if putting together a puzzle” (Nurse 9)*

## Results 7 – Macrotheme: Emotions/Lived

### Ethical dilemmas and the relationship with death:

*“Personally, I have difficulty with deaths in hospital. Not being able to give a loved one the opportunity to accompany them in the final phase of their life raises ethical questions for me about the right decisions to make in order to combine humanity and science. What struck me most is how this disease has also changed death. Seeing patients suffer alone and letting them die without being able to say goodbye to their loved ones, I think as a carer it is a defeat.” (Nurse 14)*

*“As a nurse, the fact that patients die alone, that I cannot be with them and that I limit this to their families, I understand on a rational level, but on an emotional level I find it difficult to accept.” (Nurse 12)*

## Results 8 – Macrotheme: Emotions/Lived

Emotions are also many and varied, concerning professionals and their personal and professional relationships:

*“I have been working in the hospital for years and I have never breathed this air! Not even the spring has the same fragrance, everything has changed, and today when I meet visitors in the corridors, the families of our patients, I find it hard to look them in the eyes, because the air takes on an acrid taste of death and despair, which breaks my breath. [...]*

*Covid-19, you made me feel all my limits on my skin and I was afraid...afraid for my colleagues, for my family, for my parents, afraid for my friends. Fear of not being able to support, to motivate my colleagues...a fear which, however, gave me courage in not feeling tired, in not making my own all the sadness that the patients were experiencing.” (Nurse 1)*

## Results 9 – Macrotheme: Role and image

*“I hear and read very often that nurses are heroes, but in reality we are simply people and professionals with knowledge/skills, trying to be present in the best possible way in every health struggle. There is little point in seeing ourselves as heroes at a time like the one we are experiencing now. In fact, I hope that all this will lead to a change of social and political mindset in considering concretely the value of the nursing discipline/profession.” (Nurse 17)*



## Results 10 – Macrotheme: Interprofessional Collaboration

*“The term interprofessionality nowadays has a different connotation in my eyes because I have seen that in order to achieve a common goal "patient care" the roles, the rivalries disappear, and I see nurses, doctors, physiotherapists, counsellors, housekeepers, transporters who spontaneously cooperate and pay attention to each other. [...]*

*The atmosphere in the wards, the collegiality, the support of the nursing staff, the willingness of colleagues to move to other hospitals to help is really something that this difficult situation has brought out.” (Nurse 12)*

## Discussion

- Nurses often accept increased risk of infection, as part of their chosen profession;
- Nurses often exhibit concern about family transmission;
- Nurses live a conflict between “being a good nurse” and “being a good family member”
- Nurses in a management role are torn between the need to organize everything to guarantee structure, instruments, the clinical pathways for caring for patients and the need to be a nurse that cares for patients on the front line;
- Nurses live different emotions: fear, insecurity, lack of firm points, lack of experience, feeling unprepared, tiredness, desolation.

## Conclusion

