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## Looking Past the Mask: How COVID-19 is impacting the birth experience



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Who would think that in the midst of trying to finish my intern year, I would be faced with learning how to function in the middle of a global pandemic? As an OBGYN resident, we are used to a baseline level of chaos, as we are trained to recognize emergent situations every day and act quickly. It's one of the things I oddly admire about this job. Apart from that, I also find it humbling to be included in precious moments new moms and their families share with the birth of a new child. However, while the primary

focus that surrounds COVID-19 has been placed on those who have been infected and are fighting for their lives in the hospital, I hope to shed light on what our new and expecting mothers are experiencing during this COVID-19 period.

For one, in an attempt to reduce the number of people coming in and out of the hospital, the patients we admit for labor have been limited to having one guest with them to share in their labor experience. Prior to COVID-19, moms were allotted 3 guests to stay with them during their delivery. This has been quite frustrating for our patients as it forces them to essentially choose between having either their spouse or a parent in the room with them when all deserve to share in this monumental moment.

As a physicians, we have been directed to wear masks at all times, cover our hair with scrub caps, and wear gloves during patient interactions. This has been difficult in the sense that with all of these protective measures, can my patients truly see me? Can they see that I still have their best interests at heart? It feels very impersonal when you can't even share a smile with your patient during one of the happiest times of their lives.

Understanding that our patients may need more support than ever during this time, I strive to do my part in making sure they have the best birth experience given the circumstances. In the end, I hope that they can see through the mask that I am here for them. There is an underlying level of anxiety I think everyone feels, knowing that many are falling ill as a result of this virus. However, I'm a strong advocate for trying not to worry about things out of our control. What we can control is taking the right protective precautions, such as hand washing and wearing masks, along with maintaining a positive mindset. Nothing lasts forever and I look forward to coming out of this COVID-19 era more resilient and confident in taking care of our patients.



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