



## Advocates for Responsible Care (ARxC) Covid19 Response

“You can't sit around and wait for the storm to be over. You've got to learn how to dance in the rain.” Vivian Greene

This is my daily mantra because I have been dancing in the rain my entire life. Being a long time nurse specialist, I was disappointed and anxious about not being able to be on the frontline of COVID19. I am a high risk patient with Systemic Lupus and receiving prophylactic chemo therapy. I know the danger and fears facing medical responders and was appalled when I heard their major concern was not enough Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and disinfecting supplies. What? This is Atlanta, USA, one of the top places for treating infectious disease, illness and caring for patients. We were the focus when Emory erected the best unit to house Ebola victims. Now, our nurses, doctors and staff are screaming for basic infectious disease protection! With fear and anger rising, as the Executive Director of the Advocates for Responsible Care (ARxC) I had to find a way to help them.

At ARxC we help patients and their families become strong health advocates. We are on the forefront of driving legislation for fully affordable access to prescription drugs and treatments for patients. Through advocating for patient-physician-centered legislation, we fight to reduce cultural incompetency and health care delivery disparity. Our Rx in Reach GA Coalition is well known for tackling state and federal policy issues that help patients live better lives despite their illness. We foster strategic collaborative efforts among multi-disciplinary parties to form coalitions that focus on major public health issues such as dangerous step therapy policies, expanding access to biosimilar therapies and addressing the effects of violence on our community safety.

When a “call to action” on Facebook (FB) came from Dr. Michelle Au, a well-known anesthesiologist from one of our local hospitals, I knew this was our time to act. ARxC answered a call from the doctors and medical staff at Emory/Grady and St. Joseph’s hospitals for PPE and supplies. We posted the need for supplies and PPE equipment on our FB pages, our websites and other social media platforms. We put out the word to our other coalitions to help.

Stores and usual supply chains were quickly selling out of their stock. We needed a plan to find the disinfecting supplies and make-shift PPE. On March 17, we decided to look at a COVID map of Georgia; finding counties and surrounding counties that did not have registered Covid 19 cases. Our first map, March 25, showed 36 counties out of Georgia’s 159, that did not have registered Covid19 cases and did not have surrounding counties with registered cases. We knew that Georgia had not been testing for Covid19; so there was no way to be sure who was and was not infected. We went forth assuming Covid19 was everywhere. Since the citizens of these counties did not know that they were affected we hoped that disinfecting supplies and some PPE might still be available on store and pharmacy shelves.

On March 27, my husband, Ira, and I donned our N95 masks, surgical gloves and disinfecting gels and wipes to travel to as many counties as we could. We purchased gallons of bleach, tubs of disinfecting wipes, nitrile protective gloves, Clorox, Lysol spray, Lysol and Pine Sol gallons, Peroxide, Alcohol, Swim goggles (to substitute for face shields), penlight flashlights, LED headlamps (for hands-free examinations), cough drops and energy bars(to keep the staff going!). We did this for three (3) weeks until all counties reported Covid19 cases.

Since March 27, we traveled over 700 miles to purchase basic disinfecting supplies, bleach and PPE for our hospital staff. We ran out of counties to go to that do not have Covid19. So as supplies dwindled we are now ordering on line N95, face shields, gloves and disinfecting lotions. We still shop for bleach, disinfecting solutions, and energy bars. Fortunately, one of our Rx in Reach Coalition members, an infectious disease doc, Dr. Michael Dailey, made a generous donation to order ICU/ER staff boxed meals delivered. They are working long, intense hours and can't stop to remove their PPE once dressed to eat but at least they can take a meal home with them since most are in isolation from their families.

We posted our ARxC Supply Patrol campaign on our Next Door Neighbor site and received a donation of filtration mesh to sew into N95 masks from our neighbor, Jarid Neff of Spark Plug Promotions. Through a Dialysis Crisis friend, ARxC recently found a volunteer, Lucia Bernier, to make N95 masks with a mesh filtration insert. We will distribute them to our hospital staff and also to ARxC chronically ill and dialysis patients who need them to continue their scheduled doctor and infusion visits.

We recently received a call for small laptops and tablets so patients in isolation can communicate with their loved ones and for students who need the devices to do their homework since our schools remain closed.

Creating a balance between hope and fear determines how we cope with any of life's challenges. Covid 19 has become a daunting challenge for patients and our medical colleagues. Our health depends on our medical professionals and staff who sacrifice so we may live.

What makes us help? It will always be our choice at ARxC to be the voice of those who need help. We do not stop until their voices are heard. We know fear becomes a lighter load as hope becomes an easier choice.

Come dance in the rain with us, so through your donations we can continue to protect those who save us.

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