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Nurses at the Villa St. Benedict Menni (Albese, Italy)

NURSING DURING COVID-19

The Sisters Hospitallers centre in Albese (Italy), located in the heart of the Lombardy region, was hit hard by the pandemic. Three of the centre's nursing coordinators—Federica Rompani, Fausta Sacchi, Samantha De Boni—were asked a series of questions. These are their stories.

When the COVID-19 emergency began, we saw the need to reorganise our work and the centre's healthcare personnel. Finding answers in different situations is part of our job, but the speed with which the virus spread forced us to take equally swift actions to ensure the wellbeing of guests and collaborators. We are now in the second phase, which certainly requires less speed, but which is no less difficult given the reorganisation of each department's activities and the protection procedures everyone must adopt.

One of the most challenging elements was processing our sense of being unable to control an unfamiliar and dramatic situation, a feeling that often devolved into helplessness. But, ably led by our Chief of Nursing, Dr Fumagalli, teamwork prevailed, which allowed us to face the situation calmly and rationally, particularly with regard to the swift training in the use of protective equipment. Professionals were also given the psychological support needed to act more confidently and better manage the situation based on the recommendations of the country's authorities, sadly often contradictory.

In the coming months, we expect to have learned how to communicate effectively among professionals, as well as among professionals and users. **From all of this pain, we will learn the true value of things in life and the importance of our work. We will revert to a new normal, amended based on our experiences.**

When the crisis was at its peak, we felt a storm of emotions that we will try to articulate:

- Helplessness and anger in the initial phase after the death of several users. Sadness and grief at being unable to offer family members the chance to be physically near their loved ones in the final stages of life. And even more pain at the impossibility of holding funerals.
- Mutual gratitude among all the professionals at the centre. We felt each other's support through specific acts of generosity. We also received encouragement from the outside: One for all! A local vendor donated chocolate eggs for Easter!
- Admiration in testing the responsibility of all the centre's professionals who worked long shifts to cover for colleagues stricken with the virus. Everyone went out of their way to ensure both healthy and infected users received care. It was very moving to see our colleagues start their shifts with determination, ready to accept the changes prepared by the coordinators according to the status of each department.