



Jessica Garcia, BSN RN
Infection Preventionist
San Luis Valley Health Regional Medical Center

At San Luis Valley Health (SLVH), we have many health care heroes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our employees and physicians stepped up dedicating long hours to meeting the needs of our staff, patients, and community. Leading our team of superheroes was Jessica Garcia BSN, RN. As the sole infection prevention practitioner within our organization, Jessica worked almost exclusively on COVID-19 related concerns and issues. Jessica was keenly aware of the historic significance of being an infection control practitioner during a pandemic and her action/efforts reflected her dedication and commitment.

Courage and fighting spirit: Jessica stepped up to fill the role as subject matter expert for all things COVID related. She would spend long hours researching and familiarizing herself with data and facts on this new novel virus to figure out the best possible answer or solution to the constantly changing challenges. Jessica was visible everywhere within the organization day and night, weekdays and weekends. She coordinated mass fit testing multiple times for staff, as we would run out of one type or another of N95 masks. She worked with materials management to procure PPE and fit testing material. Jessica also worked with our innovation team to determine the feasibility of alternative forms and reuse of PPE. On top of the PPE work, Jessica also worked with a team to develop plans for a negative pressure unit within the hospital as well as a respiratory clinic allowing us to increase safety for patients and staff. She developed workflows to help prevent cross contamination, implement PPE guidelines, and donning/doffing videos for training.

Strong moral code and great sense of responsibility: During the early months of the virus, Jessica sent her son to spend time with family so she could work long hours and focus on our COVID response. This selfless decision was not easy for Jessica but through her great sense of responsibility, she wanted to focus her energy on battling the virus and ensuring the safety of our staff, patients, and community without compromise to her son. During a staffing crisis when many staff were out with symptoms or being tested, Jessica again stepped up and staffed in the intensive care unit directly caring for patients.

Fighting spirit and mental toughness: Jessica continues to have a fighting spirit and shows mental toughness as the pandemic proceeds. She remains consistently responsive to anyone within the organization in helping to figure our problems, resolve complex issues, and staying on top of any new data or facts. Jessica has acted as an external advocate for SLVH staff, patients, and the community we serve. She coordinates closely with our public health partners and helps to support contact-tracing efforts. Jessica's most recent innovation in leading the fight against this pandemic was to work with a team to develop a point of distribution (POD) approach if/when we receive a vaccine against COVID-19 and need to rapidly vaccinate our staff. Jessica served as the POD manager and led a team to distribute the flu vaccine to staff using the POD method. The team created job action sheets and teams to screen staff, administer the vaccine, and answer questions. The distribution was highly successful with over 73% of staff vaccinated in less than two days.

Jessica is an asset to our staff, patients, and community. She is a true superhero.

Nominated by:
Roberta Bean
Chief Nursing Officer
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