COVID-19: Every Day Innovations for the Management of COVID-19 Patients

As hospitals struggle with limited resources to combat the coronavirus pandemic, some doctors and nurses are being creative in protecting themselves and their teams from the deadly disease and are receiving help after sharing these creative solutions. Samantha Heavrin, a nurse anesthetist (CRNA) from Louisville, Ky., now on assignment in New York City, previously worked in a burn unit and shared some of her commonsense, on-the-fly lessons learned that are not only quick and easy, but could have a big impact on efficiently managing the care of these complex patients. Heavrin shared ideas that you can take back to your team to inspire your own innovations.

Anecdotal Treatments: During a pandemic, clear guidelines based on strong evidenced-based practice are not as available. Care can be advanced through the implementation of anecdotal theories based on the evaluation of a patient’s status and needs. Current anecdotal therapies are:

- Antimalarial drugs.
- Chemotherapy drugs.
- Pronation for VQ mismatch.
- Dialysis (it is suggested dialysis patients recover with more success).

1. PPE
   - Conserve PPE by regulating use: 1 n95, 1 regular face mask, 1 face shield per day per caregiver.
   - Wear regular face masks over n95 to maintain cleanliness of n95.
   - Store the n95 in a paper bag between repeated uses, if allowed.

2. Innovative Teams
   - Assemble creative teams for large patient loads.
   - Use NP or CRNA to lead nurses unfamiliar with ICU or use intubation or line teams to support addressing patient needs efficiently.

3. Conserve Time
   - Limit documentation to essentials — vitals, medications, cardiac and pulmonary.
   - Write with dry-erase markers on glass walls when available.

4. Create Alternative Patient Access
   - Run IV pump tubing from outside of the patient room to the patient.
   - If arterial lines are present, they can be leveled and accessible from outside as well.

5. Scarcity of Resources
   - Supplies should be discarded thoughtfully.
   - A potential option when weaning patients off medications could be to keep the drugs hanging for potential future need.
   - Run infusions until dry when safe and effective drug administration is an option.