Marcial Reyes, RN
Emergency Department, Fontana Medical Center

Shortly after the start of the pandemic, charge nurse Marcial Reyes found himself on the other side of the fence when he contracted the COVID-19 virus. After spending 23 days in the hospital – isolated, comatose, and on a ventilator for more than a week – Marcial recovered and returned to his work on the frontlines to care for patients experiencing the same illness that placed him in a critical state.

After a 15-year career in nursing, Marcial said he feels even more grounded now that he has experienced patient care both from the lens of a health care worker and as a patient. "I know that I was cared for like family," Marcial said, adding that he began to understand why a nurse's job is so critical, especially now.

"I came to realize the human side of what we do as nurses," he shared. "It's not just about hanging medication, inserting an IV and drawing blood – it's about treating me as a person and giving me what I needed, which was the support of my family." Marcial described that while a patient at his own facility, his nursing colleagues and care team kept him connected to his loved ones even when he didn't know it, coordinating regular FaceTime check-ins with both his wife and son, which he said meant everything to his family.

Now, after being back at work for several months, Marcial shared his newfound appreciation for each day. "Every time I open my eyes in the morning, I see an extension of my life." Like health care workers across the Kaiser Permanente network and across the country, Marcial is committed now more than ever before to the wellbeing of his patients, especially after having been in the same position as many of them. "It's not about me anymore – it's about my patients."

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