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Statement by a quarantined nurse from a northern California Kaiser facility

March 5, 2020

As a nurse, I'm very concerned that not enough is being done to stop the spread of the coronavirus. I know because I am currently sick and in quarantine after caring for a patient who tested positive. I'm awaiting "permission" from the federal government to allow for my testing, even after my physician and county health professional ordered it.

I volunteered to be on the care team for this patient, who we knew was positive. I did this because I had all the recommended protective gear and training from my employer. I did this assuming that if something happened to me, of course I too would be cared for. Then, what was a small concern after a few days of caring for this patient, became my reality:

I started getting sick.

When employee health told me that my fever and other symptoms fit the criteria for potential coronavirus, I was put on a 14-day self-quarantine. Since the criteria was met, the testing would be done. My doctor ordered the test through the county.

The public county officer called me and verified my symptoms and agreed with testing. But the National CDC would not initiate testing. They said they would not test me because if I were wearing the recommended protective equipment, then I wouldn't have the coronavirus.

What kind of science-based answer is that? What a ridiculous and uneducated response from the department that is in charge of our health in this country.

Later, they called back, and now it's an issue with something called the "identifier number." They claim they prioritize running samples by illness severity and that there are only so many to give out each day. So I have to wait in line to find out the results.

This is not the ticket dispenser at the deli counter; it's a public health emergency! I am a registered nurse, and I need to know if I am positive before going back to caring for patients.

I am appalled at the level of bureaucracy that's preventing nurses from getting tested. That is a health care decision my doctor and my county health department agree with. Delaying this test puts the whole community at risk.

I have the backing of my union. Nurses aren't going to stand by and let this testing delay continue; we are going to stand together to make sure we can protect our patients—by being protected ourselves.