
Dr. Ivelyse, green and rebellious against Covid 19

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Dr. Ivelyse Cabeza Echevarría did not turn out to be exactly what I expected. First, she wears army clothes, not the operating room type green, but olive green as a combatant of the Revolutionary Armed Forces and with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Then I ask her if she's been afraid and with that spontaneity that breaks the whole cliché of the uniform she replies:

"Girl no, because I think I'm doing what I am told to do and I haven't been afraid. There are even people who panic, beyond fear, but I haven't felt fear because I take all the measures. Also, I have certain age, certain experience and I think that as long as I take all the protective measures I'll be fine, I believe that in this situation, you must be cautious at all times. "

At age 52, the cardiologist who led one of the medical teams against the Covid 19 at Dr. Mario Muñoz Monroy Military Hospital is a young woman. She graduated from medicine in 1991, suddenly she finds hard to tell me how many years she has as a graduate, obviously she doesn't spend time to count the days and months, but in learning and experiences.

Like the ones she had in Africa: "I spent two years in a mission in Angola, in a province that was not the capital and there we were exposed to any number of diseases, tuberculosis, malaria, typhoid fever, and so on. We were very aware in terms of measures to avoid contagion, because we were very far from Cuba, very far from the family, from everything we knew... "

Here the situation is different, "the girls" are less than a month and a few kilometers away and that, well! It's what I miss the most: "They are no so little anymore, but they are still my girls. One is 12 years old and the other is 27. I love the 27-year-old very much, but the one I miss the most is the 12-year-old, because she is the one who sets me in motion, the one who makes me do more things ".

She hardly had time to take off the obligatory bio-hazard suit with which they take care of patients, whether they are suspicious or positive, and take that refreshing shower on day 14. Those were harsh days of receiving, admitting, specifying whether it's positive or not, classifying, sending to the right ward, attend to the symptoms that were showing up.

"One day is not like the other," she explains. I was expecting the story of a daily routine, still have a lot to be amazed ahead of me: "every day different situations come up and it's extremely dynamic, because we wake up, have breakfast and each one of us heads for their previously assigned post and where we have patients in different conditions and with dissimilar pathologies. Actually, the least we have had to deal with are respiratory infections because each patient comes with their underlying pathology and that makes the job complex. Patients we do not usually attend, psychiatric patients, obstetric patients, children, bedridden elders, all kinds of patients, but really the team despite the fact that we are from different specialties, we've worked closely together, we constantly cross reference, because perhaps one has more experience in one type of patient than in others and this has worked well".

About that I was deadly sure, round and bouncing: that is a ball, fourteen days together, facing death, ends up as a family: "My greatest concern, for example, was that we were going to work with doctors from other hospitals. The main core were locals, but other doctors, nurses, even diagnostic personnel, came from other centers, but since day one seemed as if we had worked together our entire lives. "

The boss looks happy and exhausted: "Luckily, during the entire stay here none of our colleagues showed any kind of symptoms, only those of the fourteen-day intense work, tiredness, perhaps some anxiety, tension, but really symptoms that make you think about the disease, none.

"We really know that the number one goal is to take care of ourselves and among us we look for each other to comply with the measures established, everyone deals with it in their own way, there are those who are more afraid, there are those who are perhaps more daring, but there is always another person who controls so that everyone complies with what is regulated, because the most important thing, besides working, is taking care of ourselves ".

In almost thirty years of practice, Dr. Ivelyse had not had to care for so many elderly patients at the same time. That might have been her greatest challenge: "with them it's different, due to their physical condition, because of the fragility that comes with age. The other thing is to be far from our comfort zone and here I'm talking about myself, to break the routine of the children, the house, the job. I think that was the hardest thing for everyone. But we were able to tackle with that, because we crossed reference and we passed information from one ward to the other and worked everything up".

She finds comfort in the tanking she receives: via Facebook, WhatsApp, in person, by phone, the care of people, not just her family, the applauses and the decision to abide and stay home so that the sacrifice of Dr. Ivelyse and her team don't go in vain. She is inspired and shouldered by her will, that other army of brave people who in the rearguard make her feel lucky: "My whole family, my sister, my dad, my mom, my oldest daughter, everyone. I am also lucky, other colleagues don't have such large family... "

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