Healthcare hero Shari Para saw the fear in her patient's eyes. She recognized the loneliness that has become the norm as COVID-19 patients must battle the virus without family at their side.

The 37-year-old mother of two took her patient's outstretched hand and prayed with her.

The 69-year-old patient, herself a mother of two, was being treated for COVID-19 at UChicago Medicine Ingalls Memorial in Harvey. Para, an ICU nurse pictured right, had told the woman she would need a ventilator if her oxygen dropped even lower. That's when the fear set in.

Without her family there, the woman wasn't sure she could face being intubated.

"I had to be her loved one because she didn't have anybody with her to tell her that it was going to be OK," Para said. "Our patients need us for everything—whether it's to hold their hand and pray, feed them or assess them more frequently."

The moment of humanity had a profound effect. It helped Para's patient overcome fear about the medical care that could save her life.

That day, Para stayed at the hospital after her shift had ended. She wanted to make sure her newly fortified patient was as comfortable as possible in intensive care. Just as Para was leaving, the patient told Para how much she meant.

"She actually told me she loved me," Para said.

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