

My Story

By Karina Dussinger, CRNP, Wellspan Internal Medicine

Karina Dussinger, CRNP, is Fairmount's nurse practitioner through WellSpan, providing daily invaluable medical services to our residents all across campus. Here is her personal, firsthand story of one who got the vaccine and stayed safe when everyone else in her family got COVID. It is one way of getting ahead in this battle and breaking the cycle of residents and team members being sick and isolated. Most importantly, we encourage you to remember God is the great Healer, He is still in control and we put our trust in Him! On behalf of the Fairmount Administration, Board and Advisory Board, we encourage you to consider receiving the vaccine. And please continue to lift Fairmount up in your prayers.

The last few weeks have been the most horrible weeks of my life. But if I can tell my story and it helps just one person, it will be well worth it.

It all started on December 23 when my mother, who had end stage COPD, decided to sign up for hospice, shortly after being discharged from the hospital. The next day, I noticed that she seemed more tired and didn't eat much.

On Christmas day, she requested to go to my sister's house for the day because she knew this would be the last Christmas she would get to spend with her family.

Against my better judgment, I took her and my father to my sister's house. Prior to attending, everybody was tested for COVID to make sure there would be no spread. That night, after I dropped her off at home, I had a bad feeling about her health. At 4:00 a.m. I was awoken by a phone call from the hospice nurse saying my mom was running a fever and her oxygen levels were very low. I rushed to see her, only to find her in acute respiratory distress. Hospice tested her for COVID and she was positive. I spent the following 24 hours holding her hand, rubbing her back, and giving her morphine, so she could be free of the terrible air hunger COVID was causing. She passed away in my arms at 6:30 in the morning on Sunday, December 27. She was only 76.

That same day, I retested my father and he was also positive for COVID. I took him to my house to watch him closely but he was essentially asymptomatic until Wednesday morning. He told me that he couldn't sleep flat in bed, so I checked his oxygen level and it was very low. He agreed to go to the hospital where he spent the next six days struggling for every breath he



Karina Dussinger, CRNP, (left) enjoying time with her sister and parents.

took. He finally told me that he had enough, did not want any more treatment, and did not want to live without my mother. He slipped into a coma at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, January 4. At the same time, my sister was rushed to the emergency room with a fever of 103 degrees, low oxygen levels, and serious body aches. She was also admitted as COVID positive and could

not even see my father while he was dying. I stayed by my father's side for another 16 hours and watched him slowly slip away. He passed away on January 5. He was only 80. Both my parents, my husband, my sister and her husband, and all three of their children tested positive for COVID and each had varying degrees of symptoms.

I was the ONLY one who did not have any COVID symptoms, nor did I test positive at any point during this horrible ordeal. I was also the one that spent the most time with my parents as they were dying. So why was I spared? Because I had received the first COVID-19 vaccine on December 18 and had protection. I know there's a lot of misinformation in the news and social media about the vaccines and people are scared to get it. However, I truly believe in my heart that the only reason I got to spend the final hours with my parents without being sick myself was because I had the vaccine and, therefore, was not affected by the disease. I got my second COVID vaccine dose on January 8, and except for a few mild flu-like symptoms the following 12 hours, I felt just fine. I pray that no one ever has to go through anything like I experienced this past holiday season. DONT LET IT HAPPEN TO YOU. Please vaccinate!!!!" ->