When the Ish Hits the Fan

As health care workers, we’ve been taught that safe care should be our number one priority. We’re trained on the proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), which is essential not only for our safety but for the safety of patients as well.

At Kaiser Oakland, we have already run out of bleach and sanitation wipes and are running short on PPE. Management has stored the masks and has only given us access to one per shift unless we are taking care of potential COVID patients.

It wasn’t until after workers had a demonstration outside of Kaiser that they were finally allowed to bring their own masks from home. And now, there is a rumor that we will be getting more masks and we will have plenty when the surge of patients arrives. But who can trust a company that compromises safety to save money, even on a regular day? Safety is only a priority until it affects Kaiser’s bottom-line of saving money and cutting corners.

They Are the Big Shock

Much like the US government, Kaiser has apparently been caught by surprise by this pandemic. But should it really have been this much of a shock that something like this could happen? NO!

The reality is that Kaiser, like the US government, had plenty of time and resources to prepare for a situation like this. There are no reasons, other than greed, why Kaiser couldn’t have stocked up on extra PPE and sanitation equipment. There are no reasons why Kaiser can’t muster all of its influence and technological knowhow to increase the production of the soon to be desperately needed respirators.

We have been repeatedly warned about the potential for natural disasters, emergencies, and pandemics. The real shock here is not the virus, it is the lack of preparedness.

We Shouldn’t Wait for Them

Workers in a General Electric (GE) aviation facility in Massachusetts protested after the company announced a layoff of nearly 2,600 workers. GE workers are not only opposing the layoffs, but they are demanding that the company shift production to start making the respirators that hundreds of ICUs around the country are clamoring for.

The behavior of companies like GE is just another example of where the priorities of the capitalists lie - they are not here to protect workers, and the health of others. The behavior of the workers on the other hand, is just another example of why we shouldn’t wait for the bosses to tell us what’s right. They never will.

Dear Suzi,

In all my years in healthcare, I never thought it would get this bad. When I started in the medical field, I remember the pride I felt helping people in my community get better and stay healthy. These days my shifts are full of dealing with chronic understaffing, waiting hours for a break or meal, and risking my life without the proper safety equipment. But worst of all is knowing patients aren’t receiving the care they deserve! How’s a healthcare worker supposed to care for their community when there’s so many obstacles?

-Not Thriving

Dear Not Thriving,

Everyone I’ve ever met who works at a hospital all have one thing in common - their calling in life is to help people. However, working under these conditions for years has a way of making people feel as if nothing can change. But I’d bet if you asked people around you, they feel the same way. Improving the working conditions can begin with as simple of an act as talking with one another about what’s happening at work and sharing ideas on how to change it. Together, the people who make Kaiser run are capable of delivering humane healthcare.

-Suzi

Speak Out Now Zoom Townhall

The Corona Crisis: Workers’ Lives at Risk
Saturday April 4, 4pm

https://speakoutsocialists.org/online-townhall-sat-april-4/