



## Is Nursing Without a Mask Strange?



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Before I go on my annual leave, I thought I'd drop a line.

Last week I did my first shift in a little private hospital in my hometown.

When I arrived on the ward, I called in at the Sister's office. As I headed towards her door, I realised I was the only nurse wearing a mask. I was still in my civilian clothes, and as I said, my mask was on.

After changing into my uniform, I left the changing room. It felt strange, almost bizarre, to see my colleagues without a mask. None of the medical staff were wearing it. It felt as if I was in a parallel universe.

The news that the private healthcare sector in the UK got rid of the mask three weeks ago was not on my mind (meaning brain!) at all. I missed that important information. How could I?

After I logged in, the ward Sister told me that I could take off my mask if I wished but that she would respect it if I wore it.

My mask off? Taking it off? Putting it back into my nursing bag? No way! At that moment, it felt like

my mask was glued on or heavy, like it weighed 1000kg. That little cloth on my face keeps me healthy (as much as possible). So why should I not wear it?

During my 10-hour shift in that ultra-busy ward, I realised that my colleagues were guinea pigs. Am I right? Maybe or definitely? That is the question!

If these staff nurses become all ill or test positive for COVID-19 within the next few days/weeks in massive cohorts, the mask policy will have to be reinstated. The NHS is considering removing the mask policy, but we are not there yet!

As I said, what kind of harm does that little cloth make anyway? No harm is my clear answer. However, it is important to consider the kind of harm a COVID 19 infection would cause. Big harm, as we all know by now, because COVID-19 is a life-threatening illness and can be harmful to all - vaccinated people + healthcare staff.

I think, and it is my strong belief, it is too early to relax everything here. It has only been two years and three months since the horror of COVID 19 hit Europe. Why can we not wait a bit longer to see things clearer? Must everything go back to how it was before? Have we not learned our lesson from the challenges we've faced in the last two years?

It makes me think. My mask has become a part of me on the ward, in the supermarket, on the train, on the plane etc.

Is it too much to ask to be protected as a nurse and protect myself? I don't think so!

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