

Report on Patient Privacy Volume 23, Number 12. December 07, 2023 Dramatic Portrayal of Care During Early COVID-19 Costs Hospital \$80K; OCR: No Prior Authorization

By Theresa Defino

Spring 2020 was a terrifying period in the annals of COVID-19, and New York was at the epicenter. COVID-19 cases, and deaths, already the highest in the nation, were surging; there were no specific treatments and vaccines were but a distant dream. Although people branded health care workers heroes, banging pots and pans nightly to honor them, with no visitors allowed, most had no real knowledge of medical personnel's desperate—and often futile—fight to save patients.

That changed in April of that year when St. Joseph's Medical Center (SJMC) in Yonkers—which borders the Bronx and is two miles north of Manhattan—invited Associated Press (AP) photographer John Minchillo into the hospital's emergency room, intensive care unit and triage and testing tent set up outside.

His 21 photos, which are still online, captured exhausted medical staff, their faces lined from heavy, hot masks and other protective gear; a clutch of doctors and nurses resuscitating a shirtless man; a patient encircled by ventilator tubing. Only staff were identified by name.^[1]

The accompanying story by Brian Mahoney—who told *RPP* that Minchillo was on site, but that he was not—was fairly short at a little more than 800 words. But Mahoney had done his reporting: although no specific patients were discussed or identified, the story quoted six administration and medical leaders, including Chief Financial Officer Frank Hagan, who complained at the time about price gouging of masks, gowns and protective shields.

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