

## **Community Health Pandemic Response Reflection Assignment**

### **memorable patient observation/ interaction**

For my community health pandemic response experience, I volunteered with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with their COVID-19 shot clinic. In this role I administered and documented vaccines for the healthcare workers in this hospital. The most memorable interaction I had during this experience was when I gave a vaccine to a healthcare worker who was a Black woman. Like nearly everyone else that day, she was very excited about the opportunity to get vaccinated. She asked if she could record her experience, and handed her phone to a friend who recorded as she spoke to her connections on social media, detailing the safety of the vaccine, and how she felt fine as I administered her shot. When she was done recording, she briefly spoke of the lack of trust of medicine and the vaccine within her community, and how she felt it was her responsibility as a healthcare provider and a woman of color to try to dispel misinformation and mistrust as much as she could.

I was moved by this woman in so many ways: her courage and willingness to speak up, her resilience as a healthcare provider in the time of COVID-19, and her conviction to help others are qualities she demonstrated at levels to which I can only hope to aspire. The lack of trust she referenced reminded me starkly of the grave errors and outright racist atrocities that have been committed within the practice of medicine. From Tuskegee, to Henrietta Lacks, to everyday racism and beyond, the lack of respect that the medical profession has traditionally had for informed consent, particularly the consent of the Black community, has done very real damage to the relationship between medical professionals and the people they serve.

As future medical professionals, we need to remember the humanity of our patients and to treat them all with the dignity and respect that commands. Informed consent is crucial. It is also vital to reckon with history. Without an understanding of the many deeply-rooted issues, we cannot begin to heal the wounds inflicted by a racist society. As a white woman, I know I come from an unearned position of privilege. I know that I need to do better to help make space for my colleagues who are of underrepresented backgrounds to share their experiences as professionals and as patients. I need to be vigilant about racist and other unjust behavior, and do the work of listening, educating myself, and actively pursuing anti-racist actions in all areas of my life. To become the virtuous professional I aim to be, I take the profound lessons of courage, humility, and respect for others that I had the privilege of observing from this interaction. I will carry this experience with me as a reminder of the social responsibility we all carry, particularly as healthcare providers.

Attached is an original painting I completed as a part of this reflection. Although the “thank you” (intended for the healthcare professional I described in my interaction) is not nearly enough, it is a place to start.

