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My Experience in Quarantine

On October 18, 2020, at 7:30am after going to bed only a few hours earlier, I awoke to the sound of my roommate's voice, "Arianna, Arianna". I looked over to her bed less than six feet away from mine and see her on the phone trembling. After several minutes of me half-asleep wondering what is going on, she murmurs, "I tested positive". I quickly searched through my phone and saw I tested negative. Although I was negative, I had been with my roommate all night, sharing drinks, and sitting close to one another. I was convinced I would come out positive too in the next couple days, so I put on my mask, gave her a hug and she was out the door to go home within just a few minutes. I knew I was going to have to quarantine for 14 days and I thought contact tracing would be calling me shortly. I packed my bags and woke up my other friends who had been with my roommate the night before and was all ready to go before 8am. I was nervous, but believed I would be in a suite with two of my best friends for the next 14 days, so it would all be okay. This moment stays engraved in my mind.

Little did I know at the time, quarantining at school was not going to be as seamless as I thought. Contact tracing did not call me until 10:30am. They sent me to wait a half-hour in line to get a COVID test just to be turned away because of miscommunication in the health center. I did not get a call from Residence Life until 3pm and they sent us to the basement of a freshman dorm with random roommates. We had to grab all our belongings in 2 trips which meant I could not bring the things that made me feel most comfortable, such as my mattress pad and extra blankets. From the arrival in our quarantine dorm, it was phone call after phone call, to every school administrator and our parents. My 2 friends and I gathered in 1 room crying because of the situation we were in. We wanted answers and we were not getting them. It was extremely

hard to focus on schoolwork, and some of my teachers were not as relaxed as others, causing me more stress to get in work that night.

I never realized how stressful getting necessities were until I had to have someone do everything for me. For the first 24 hours, we had one small water bottle per person and no place to get more water. Our food arrived at random hours and had to be eaten cold because we had no refrigerator or microwave for the first couple days. Being someone that lives off the endorphins I get from going for a daily run, I was limited to running back and forth on the .02-mile backyard with a mask on. On top of that, we did not know if we had COVID because we were getting mixed information on when we would be able to get a test. We were the trial group to what quarantine would look like to many others in the coming weeks as the college still was working out the kinks.

As the days went on, the conditions got worse. It was nerve-racking to have new girls moving into the floor, filling up the floor to almost 20 girls sharing 2 showers, 2 toilets and the hardest part, 1 refrigerator. I did not know how close of contact the new girls had come in with people who had COVID and how scared I should be that I was living in such close quarters with them. They could be the ones causing my quarantine time to reset. Additionally, the more meals they had to prepare for the floor caused more trouble for me because it was hard to keep track of my many allergy and dieting restrictions, so meals were sometimes messed up or not delivered to me when other the girls got theirs. I never expected that quarantine would take such a toll on my mental health. I did yoga every day and stair workouts to try to relieve the stress, but I was sleeping restlessly at night.

Towards the end of the week, it came down to the decision of when I was going to choose to take a test. If I got an extra test and it came back negative, I would have to go home.

Luckily, I was well informed on incubation periods and my risk of coming up positive in the second week because of the Honors disease colloquium I took this semester. Through reading a book on COVID-19 and doing research on the incubation period during class, I learned that it was unlikely I would test positive during the second week because the average incubation period was 5-7 days. It becomes highly unlikely for me to test positive if I were to receive a negative test after day 10. We also learned that the COVID tests are not advanced enough to provide a definite answer, so it is still important that I quarantine the full 14 days. After talking to my parents about the even greater risk I was put at for catching COVID from the new girls moving in, we decided I would come home if I tested negative at the end of the week.

Luckily, I tested negative and after 7 days in the basement of Lakeside, I was able to go home. Although I was stuck in my room and did not have my friends with me, being home boosted my mental health. I was able to go on walks and runs around my neighborhood (with a mask on of course!) and my friends from home came to deliver me snacks and candy. I got another test around day 10 and I was still negative. Not only myself, but all my roommate's contacts tested negative and never got COVID. This was crazy to me as I had been convinced at least one of us caught it. This made me realize COVID does not spread as easily as the media perceives it, and there are so many other factors that create a positive test.

Using my knowledge from the disease colloquium and being able to discuss this matter in class due to the small class size and openness of my teacher to talk about topics that interested us, I was able to come up with some theories as to why none of my roommate's contacts ended up with COVID. First, my roommate could have very recently caught the virus that she was not yet shedding it. Since she did not get symptoms until a few days after her positive test, she was considered asymptomatic at the beginning. It is much less likely for an asymptomatic person to

spread the virus. This is true for many diseases such as the different types of flu and other coronaviruses. Given this info, it is important to remember COVID still does have a higher transmission rate than most other viruses and combined with it being not as deadly as something like Ebola, this is why it has been able to sustain in the human population for so long now. My second theory relates to the many factors it takes to come together which make someone catch a virus. A simple exposure is not enough. These factors can include the environment (indoor/outdoor ventilation, weather), host factors (age, infectiousness, severity of illnesses), socio-economic factors (crowding during meals, shared spaces), and contact pattern (proximity to index case, time of contact, contact frequency, activity, duration of exposure). During class we looked at a Venn-diagram illustrating how all 4 of these factors must come together for someone to catch the virus after being exposed. It is quite possible that none of these factors ever came together quick enough during the time my roommate's contacts were exposed to her. My last theory relates directly to me and my situation before coming back to school. I worked at a golf course all summer where there were little to no COVID regulations in place. I did not wear a mask, shook people's hands and touched their belongings. I believe with the amount of people I came into close contact with this summer, I could have possibly gotten COVID and had antibodies in my system still when I was exposed to my roommate. During class, we researched antibodies and the ability to get COVID twice. As a class, we found current research showing that antibodies stay in the system for at least 3 months after getting COVID. Since I was not tested all summer, there was no way to know if I had COVID 2 months prior to my roommate's positive test.

Prior to taking this class, I did not think COVID or the diseases we learned about would ever affect my life, until it did. It was very helpful during my quarantine process to have weekly

meetings to discuss the updated information relating to COVID. I believe the knowledge I have gained will help me as I continue my studies in the medical field to someday become a physical therapist.