

 **Canada's Lifeline:** Our frontline



This is what we're called to do.

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, we're bringing you stories of our employees who continue to work on the front lines. Dora Lopes-Carvalho manages a team in Winnipeg which tests the blood of patients and donors to facilitate transfusions and inform clinical decisions.

I have worked in transfusion medicine for more than 20 years. It was my first love. The area where I work, diagnostic services, operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

In Manitoba, we do the majority of testing as a centralized transfusion medicine service. We conduct a wide range of testing and investigation to determine which blood components are the best match for patients. That involves some testing of donor blood but most of our work involves testing samples from patients. We also do perinatal testing which helps physicians keep mothers and babies healthy during pregnancy and after a birth.

'There's no option to work from home'

This is what we're called to do, so we come to work every day. There's no option to work from home. I've never worked with people who are more conscientious and more dedicated to that patient at the end of the line. They all care very much about each other as well. It's a great family to be a part of.

Together we've done a lot of brainstorming and planning to work safely during the pandemic. I don't want to see anyone get sick so we take physical distancing seriously. We've moved some workstations around and installed plexiglass barriers to make sure people have their own little

space. We're even using Skype sometimes to communicate with people nearby, so we can continue to meet, do our work and train without sitting beside each other.

The physical distancing is a challenge. We were joking about yelling "Moose! Moose!" when you pass someone in the hall, or when you feel someone is too close to you, to send a message about staying as far away as the length of a moose from your co-workers.

'It's really important to unwind'

It's really important to unwind after being in hyper-speed mode for most of the day. Lately my teenage son has been making dinner, which is a really nice treat for me. He is an excellent cook. He is supposed to graduate from high school in June, and I feel sad for him missing out on a fun end to the year. But he's safe, and his class is safe, and I'm hoping they'll be able to celebrate in some other way later on. I rely on my support network of close family and friends who are an important part of my life and keep me grounded and positive.

Sometimes I'll go for a ride on my motorcycle. There's this road called Old River Road just outside of Winnipeg. It's a long road with lots of curves that goes along the Red River. The scenery is beautiful. With the wind in my face, I feel like it's just me and the world.