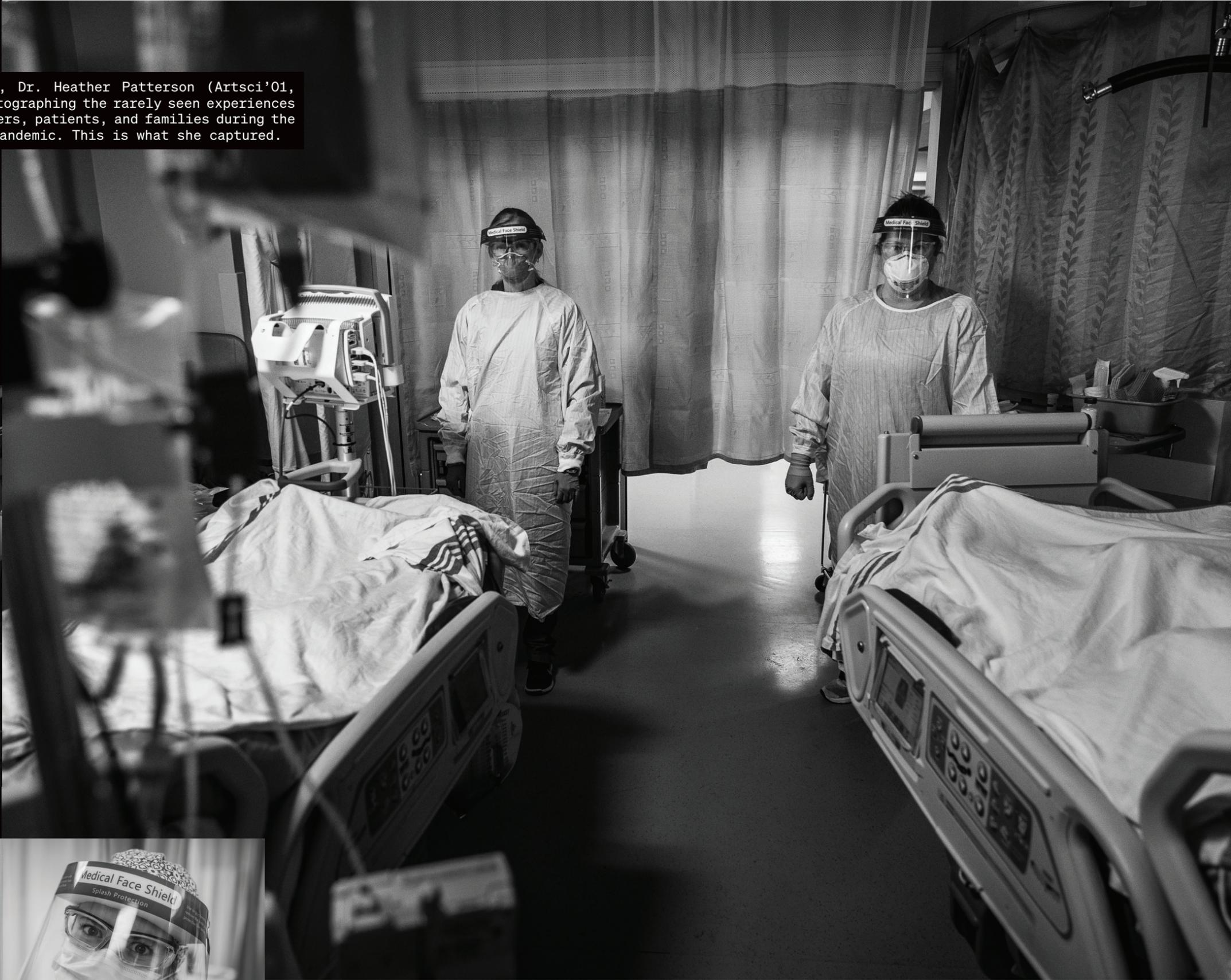


In November 2020, Dr. Heather Patterson (Artsci'01, Med'05) began photographing the rarely seen experiences of frontline workers, patients, and families during the global COVID-19 pandemic. This is what she captured.

OPERATING

BEHIND



THE LENS



Photography and text by Dr. Heather Patterson

AS AN EMERGENCY PHYSICIAN,

wife, and mother, early in the pandemic I felt an overwhelming sense of uncertainty and apprehension. My husband, also an emergency physician, and I struggled to find the balance between protecting our children, staying safe, and planning for the worst-case scenario at work. It was through my camera lens that I was able to slow down and observe the shared human experience of the pandemic: tragedy and vulnerability; kindness and compassion; laughter and tears; teamwork and resilience. I have captured images that are simultaneously heartbreaking and heartwarming and that show the paradox of caring for people during times of tragedy. Through this project, I have reconnected with

the purpose and privilege of being a physician and I moved to a place of optimism and pride for how we are providing care for those in our community.

We are now facing the fourth wave of COVID in Alberta. Our hospitals are overwhelmed and vaccination has become a political and personal issue for many. About 80 per cent of patients admitted to hospital are unvaccinated. Moral injury and injustice are causing an exacerbation of the already significant burnout in health-care workers. During this time, I hope that my images continue to tell the authentic story of our COVID-19 experiences, but also highlight moments of kindness, compassion, resilience, and teamwork.



←With family members unable to visit, the role of health-care providers expanded. Ellen and Paul talked about family, the challenges of being in hospital, and hope for recovery.

→When a patient arrives in the ICU, the primary nurse may spend two to three hours in full PPE getting the patient settled. It can be hot and uncomfortable but is a key part of care. An ICU nurse briefly stood in the doorway while an X-ray was taken after intubation and central line placement. She had been in the room for two hours and 45 minutes.

→ Daniel, a volunteer in the ICU, spends seven days a week supporting patients and staff. One of his roles is helping patients video call family members after extubation. After being intubated for six days, this man waited for his wife and daughters to connect to the call. Squeals of delight soon filled the room and tears of joy ran down his face.



A FOURTH WAVE

Alberta is under the strain of the fourth wave of COVID-19. With cases per capita over four times the national average, ICUs are full and consideration is being given to flying critical care patients to different provinces. Critical triage implementation training has been done for health-care teams. A common sight, two patients per room in the Intensive Care Unit, is stretching nursing to capacity, once again. 🙏



↑ A team of 10 in the ICU moved this unstable patient into the prone position to improve their oxygenation.

↙ Lori, a senior nurse in the emergency department, is often found at her patients' bedsides holding hands or offering gestures of kindness and compassion. The patient in this image was about to be intubated and she is explaining that the team will take good care of him.

