
REFLECTION

COVID 19 - WARRIOR OR WORRIER?

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I was doing my emergency duty in PICU when the roster came out in one of the many whatsapp groups, informing that I am a part of the first covid roaster. Honestly I was not paranoid but yeah I won't deny, it did send some chills down my spine. The very same evening while I was struggling with cannula issues of one of my patients, I got another news and that I must say not just left me paranoid but irritated me to the core. We were asked to vacate our current rooms in hostel in order to create enough rooms for quarantine for staff posted in the covid wards. It felt as if within a span of two hours my world, my very tiny world was uprooted and was brought upside down. Staying far away from home in the pursuit of achieving my dream, hostel room is my only space, where I unload and reload myself, it is my only arena where I can be whatever I want and can choose to be nothing at all. Yes, it is that important a space and suddenly someone wanted to take that away, imagine the paranoia! Thank God to our seniors who came to our rescue and finally we were allowed to stay in our room with some arrangements being done for entry and exit. But, in our heads we were prepared to give away even this space if need be.

Like the above notices, third notice of mock drill came, went by smoothly. The real horror knocked our doors when we heard Covid-19 patients are actually coming to our campus and finally those rosters were going to get active than just lying dormant in some whatsapp group chat.

First working team of doctors were created out of the first roster released. No, I wasn't the part of it. But I knew, its not far away. One lazy Sunday afternoon, HR calls me informing my duties begin from Wednesday and to pack my bags accordingly, thats it. There it was, the call I wasn't afraid to receive but when I did, it left me with thousands of questions rather than surmountable fear.

I firstly informed the department family and then my family back Home and to my surprise neither my Professional Father nor my Biological Father panicked, all they said was its a moment of pride, take all precautions and we will be praying for your well being and like that division of labour was done for this covid-19 duty lying ahead.

Then began the preparation for the journey ahead, all bags packed, all advices stored carefully, the do's and don'ts were received well in grey matter. Right before leaving my room for the quarantine, I picked up the white board marker and wrote in the board fixed next to my desk- "Covid-19 Warrior" and like that I bid adieu to my tiny world.

Rooms were allotted, I was all set to live differently in the same building I have been staying for past one year. Duty was to begin in few hours, woke up to dress up in Scrubs, reminiscing the MBBS days, next hurdle was to wear contact lens, since I have myopia of -7 and spectacle is a necessity, it wasn't possible to wear the protective eye gear with spectacles so I chose to wear lenses for safety purposes and to avoid any scope for exposure. My shift was from 8 a.m to 2 p.m, we were deported to the wards along with nursing staff and house keeping staff, all anxious, having some idea of the work and no idea of the danger that lies ahead but all ready to perform their duty. We all went to donning area and helped each other getting into that PPE following the instructions pasted on the wall and then we walked towards the wards, the real territory.

Patients were sleeping, but we, we were wide awake with fear and confusion! One by one we started doing our assigned jobs. First few minutes into that PPE, I was restless, was adjusting the eyewear to all different positions possible so that it pains less but to my amazement, it was more painful than the last time.

When patients were done with breakfast, I went to address the patients through the VR booth, took me some time to understand how the VR booth worked and then I started calling one patient at a time, talked with them, noted their complaints and wished them speedy recovery. While I was doing all this, not even once did the fear creep in,

all my attention and struggle was confined with adjusting the face shield which was hampering the conversation.

While addressing the patients I had this weird thought knocking me, they all look so normal, why all of us are so scared of them and then it clicked, VIRUS, one virus differentiated these healthy looking people from the other healthy looking people and like that in a moment I was filled with the differences of strange and not so strange.

As the first shift ended we were all restless, dehydrated and in desperate need to go to toilet. Coming back to room was a relief but the horror of exposure prevailed, without taking a shower I didn't even dare to either have a glass of water or use the toilet and like that with cold water splashing, first of seven duties ended.

One after the other days passed by, the struggle of wearing PPE for six hours straight was same for each day, it just didn't get better and no we didn't get use to it at all, infact last two days were horrible than first five.

More than the physical work it was mental exhaustion. To combat our fears and anxiousness, each one of us prayed in the wards every morning in our different languages before beginning our shift, it somehow helped us survive those six hours.

As the days passed by and we finally reached the end of our one week long duties, we were all relieved and once again we were asked to pack our bags and get ready to be shifted to different location for passive quarantine. Being a travel freak and always wanting to experience the "living out of my bag" feeling, I was okay with so much packing and unpacking and was actually looking forward to some "ME" time in a new location. Solo trip of a kind, must tell you!

Before I could begin the Solo trip which I, was taking with many others, we were required not to produce a passport or a ticket but a swab for covid testing, how interesting! As part of protocol we were tested for covid before we left for our passive quarantine. If you thought wearing PPE was painful, boy that swab left us with TEARS.

Many a times I have walked the lane of campus but this ride from hostel to outside was one of its kind, lanes decorated with people full of pride and honour for us, clapping enthusiastically for our bravery, thanking us for what we have been through in past week, from Principal to clerks, fellow students to nurses of our wards, all of them were there just cheering and beaming with pride, this I tell you was a complete emotional rollercoaster. It sure left me with teary eye and blurring vision but an unbelievable feeling of gratitude towards all.

Passive quarantine began beautifully with such lovely farewell and thousands of things to introspect and millions of thoughts to share. Five days into this Passive Quarantine and staying at a luxury place with minimum basic things has given a new meaning and dimension to my otherwise usual life. This Covid-19 taught me not just one but many things, I have always thanked almighty for his enormous blessings and today I thank him more for blessing me with enough courage and strength to undergo this and come out stronger.