

FRONTLINE WARRIORS

THE HEROES OF COVID-19

6

INSPIRATIONAL
STORIES

*From Doctors in the fight
against Covid-19*

INDRA

Dr. Venkata Krishna Kolli

**General
Covid patients treated - 10,000**

The major issue that we first faced was that there was not enough doctor patient ratio, which is still the same. One more thing is that the management was not available to provide for emergency drugs, due to the high inflow of patients, and even beds were not available when we needed to shift critical patients to the ICU. Inadequate staff in the hospitals even hindered the process of attending to patients. PPE kits were mostly unavailable, but slowly we are trying to get adequate supply of it. The experience I had professionally and personally were

completely different. Professionally, it was more or less fine, we just had to cope up with the pressure and had to work without taking any breaks or stopping to rest. I did fall sick a few times, as I had to work continuously for long hours. Even after being tired, we had to think about our family and restricted ourselves from coming in contact with them. I stayed away from my family and socially distanced myself in the hostel room. The journey overall has been full of experiences. When the first few cases arrived at our hospital, we had shortage of kits to test

these patients, and also faced shortage of other equipment. I gave consultation over the phone in the beginning, as there was no other way out. As Doctors, during this time even though normal people don't have symptoms, we advise everyone to take oral medication - oral antibiotic, oral multivitamins, oral supplements. Through the whole process, there has been an issue with cost efficiency. Patients were being charged high fees, as hospitals had to bring in special equipment and neither patients nor Doctors or Hospitals were being

able to manage the costs well. I made sure that I was always following the safety protocols and had the safety gears on. We did give our patients separate safety kits, different for mild, moderate, severe, and critical cases. As of now, we would like to suggest that CT Scan be made free for all patients, as swab tests may go wrong sometimes and not every patient can afford a CT Scan.



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**Dr. Akhya Sharma
Tata Main Hospital, Jamshedpur
Neurosciences
Covid patients treated - 300**

One of the major concerns during this time of a pandemic, was with regard to availability of adequate staffing. Due to the large inflow of cases, adequate staff wasn't available. Through this time, my personal Covid experience has been hectic. But overall, it was rewarding, as I got to help so many people and at the same time it was a great learning experience. There were obviously several moments of doubt when it came to the safety of my family, as I was

always in contact with Covid infected patients. Everything aside, when the first case arrived at our hospital we were strictly following the pre-decided protocol by the administrative wing along with all the safety measures that are required to be followed. As a doctor, the best safety practice is to wear a mask, socially distance oneself and follow good sanitation measures. Apart from being cautious and following safety measures, there were major changes that



were made to my daily life as well as to our hospital. We had to serve extra duty hours, hospital wings dedicated and transformed to Covid wings and a special Covid team was put in place, that was replaced every 2 weeks. Cost efficiency is of course a major crisis during covid-19. I think the only thing that I would suggest is more staffing and efficient management of resources.

**Dr. Harsha Sarawgi
DY Patil Hospital Nerul
Resident Medical Officer
Covid patients treated - 300**

Everything was a major concern during this period. This was my first year of work exposure and dealing with a pandemic wasn't easy at all. Professionally it was a tough time since my duty hours were prolonged. Surviving in the PPE kits wasn't easy at all in this humid weather conditions. Some days we had continuous duties due to lack of manpower. Personally I had to move out of home to keep my family safe so it was another



The major changes were that I became more responsible and sound in these last few months.



challenge from cooking, washing and doing other chores along with work. There were several moments of doubt, of course. Every time I developed the slightest fever the thought of being covid positive scared me. We as an institution were very much prepared for it. We started taking appropriate precautions from the very beginning, as Maharashtra as we all know was one of worst affected states in India. For precaution, we all were provided with masks and PPE kits, face shield and all other equipment needed. We had to always wear scrubs in hospital thus not contaminating our clothes.

I have now started doing all the household chores as well to maintain my safety. Our hospital is now a Covid dedicated hospital with over 200 ICU beds for critical Covid patients. Cost efficiency is of course a major concern during this time. Changes to the system that I would recommend at present are that there should be more hospitals dedicated to covid patients where they can get treatment at a minimal cost. There should be screening programs to isolate the subclinical cases. There should be awareness campaigns and fines in public places for unnecessary gatherings and for not wearing masks

Dr. Ritam Banerjee
ID & BG Hospital, Kolkata
MBBS
Covid patients treated - 600

Covid has been difficult, and honestly speaking, one of the major concerns was that PPE kits were not really available in most hospitals when the pandemic first broke. Gradually, times have changed. Covid has now become a part and parcel of our daily lives. My experience in a nutshell would be hot and sweaty! Jokes apart, it is a beautiful experience to service patients in isolation wards and guiding Covid suspects. Of course there were several moments of doubt with regard to the safety of my family. I stayed

away from my home for almost a month when I first became a primary contact, back in May. As a doctor I would say suggest everyone to always wear a mask, if possible gloves and face shield as well. Carry your own sanitizer. Use it from time to time. The major change that happened was a part of our hospital became a Covid centre. It felt a bit scary at first. But we gradually got accustomed. Cost efficiency is of course a major concern. The government is doing all it can in health infrastructures. It's time for others to come

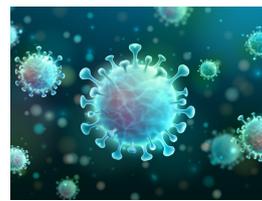
forward as well. The major changes that I would suggest would be, protecting Covid suspects in isolation wards from contamination and segregating them from positive cases, that's something we have overlooked right from the beginning.



Dr. Saloni Mittal
Mysore District Hospital
ENT specialist
Covid patients treated - 60

The major concern that I had to face during Covid-19 was with the availability of PPE kits. Covid has affected my professional life to a great extent. Our surgery training has been put on hold since the pandemic. Also, we are always working under fear of getting infected. Our classes and seminars are not being conducted which further affects our academics. Personally, I'm always worried about my family and their well being. My grandfather is asthmatic and quite old. Also there has been a decline in mental health among my peers as well as my family members since the onset

of the pandemic. This caused a great doubt in my mind about the safety of my family all the time. I didn't want to infect them in any way. I ensure proper disposal of the personal protective equipment. I frequently sanitize my hands before and after examining a patient. A major change that happened when Covid cases started arriving at our hospital was that, all our OTs were closed. Lectures and seminars were put on hold. OPD timing was reduced. Proper examination of the patients was not being done as my field is ENT. We were put on swab duties as well Covid ward duties.



Cost efficiency has been a major concern at all times after Covid struck. The only change that I would recommend at this stage would be with regard to the availability of PPE kits.



Dr. Aakash Tuli
MedStar Washington Hospital Centre
Internal Medicine
Covid patients treated - 50

A major concern during Covid is the lack of education among people not following social distancing or using masks properly. Personally it affected the time I could spend with my family before I shifted to the USA permanently. I had a lot of things planned for this year, both career wise and personally which had to be compromised due to Covid. Professionally it was challenging to educate people about Covid and get them to take it seriously. In the beginning even us medical professionals didn't have enough info about the virus to handle it well. It was also difficult exposing ourselves to Covid day in and day out, putting not only ourselves but our families at risk. There were moments of doubt, of course, I didn't get to meet my grandparents and cousins for many weeks while I was actively involved in Covid care or quarantining thereafter. I had to reluctantly stay with my parents putting them at risk due to the lack of another alternative. Also travelling during Covid was another challenge altogether. When the first case arrived at our hospital, we immediately put them into isolation and put on isolation precautions like PPE/gowns. We had to do a literature review and look at the latest data emerging to take care of patients the best we could. The most important precaution we have taken as



doctors is Masks. Masks. Masks. If you are within 6 ft. of someone, wear a mask. The major changes that happened were with regard to the use of PPE and masks. All the rounding and conferences, teaching lectures were all made online. Anything that did not require human contact was digitized. Cost efficiency is definitely a major concern. A lot of planning is required to judiciously manage and acquire enough PPE, kits, ventilators, drugs and to manage hospital occupancy so that people who require critical care the most have access to it. About changes in the system, you can't put a band-aid on a fracture. The change needs to be long term with better education delivered to the people and a higher investment in research and preventative measures so that such a pandemic doesn't occur again; or if it does occur again, we are better equipped to handle it. This has shown us how outdated and lacking our current public healthcare policies are and they need to be re-written from scratch.

About 'Frontline Warriors'

We understand that every person has their own experience during this pandemic, especially our heroes on the frontline. Doctors and Health Care Professionals are on the frontline of the fight against Covid-19. They are working continuously and tirelessly, risking their own lives, to save the lives of Covid-19 patients. Their efforts have been widely acclaimed at all levels.

Indra salutes them in their fight and takes the initiative of amplifying the voice of the frontline warriors, by documenting their experience in this magazine.

To tell you a bit about us, at Indra we make clean technology systems for water management & sustainability. To help India fight COVID-19, we're developing an Air and PPE disinfection system (VAJRA) with support from CAWACH (Centre for Augmenting WAR with COVID-19 Health Crisis) program of Department of Science & Technology, Government of India.

We would also like to thank our participating doctors, who took time out of their busy schedule to share with us an invaluable experience. Thank you for your contribution to society during such a difficult time.

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