

Journey of COVID Warrior

The Psycho Social Ramifications of the COVID 19 — A Personal Treatise

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The COVID 19 pandemic is taking its toll on humanity in more ways than readily discernable. The number of recoveries inspires hope but it needs to be ensured that apart from physical recovery a holistic rehabilitation of the sufferer is contemplated.

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Key words : COVID 19, Holistic, Rehabilitation.

The COVID 19 pandemic has revolutionized the way we look at disease and its consequences.. The pathology involves every organ system of the body – has immediate and far reaching sequelae.

But beyond medicine there lies immense psychological, social and economic implications whose enormity cannot be fully be gauged at present.⁽¹⁾

However my own brush with the disease has triggered some reflections which I wish to share.

THE DENIAL :

The onset of fever is met with denial.

- I have been cautious enough.
- I have been meticulously devouring hydroxy chloroquine every week
- I work in a non COVID hospital.

THE ACCEPTANCE :

I go for the test when I fail to smell my favorite perfume.

I am COVID 19 positive. The information is to be digested; a brave front is to be put up as I feel my family is more vulnerable than I am.

THE DECISION :

- Do I stay at home?
- Do I stay at a Safe home?
- Do I go to hospital?
- Proper isolation is difficult at home.
- Risk factors - looming in the background.
- So the hospital it is.

Editor's Comment :

- It is natural to feel anxious, marginalized, fearful, and uncertain during and after COVID19 infection.
- A compassionate support system is necessary to deal with these issues comprehensively.

THE DEPARTURE :

The family goes into quarantine.

The 102 ambulance arrives, - two PPE-clad individuals sitting at the front direct me over phone to open the door at the back and get into the vehicle.

I obey.

Curious onlookers on the lane stand and stare. I feel like a criminal being taken to jail.

I do not judge them- I see fear in their eyes.

THE HOSPITAL STAY :

I was febrile with a normal oxygen saturation.

But all around me were people on oxygen therapy, antibiotics, steroids, Remdisivir. So till I became a febrile five days later I was fearful and apprehensive.

I did not know whether I would have adverse effects from Favipiravir or LMWH which I received.

My being a medical professional has complicated matters. I am aware of the full spectrum of the disease.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA :

It is full of horror stories.

Documentation of recurrences, residual systemic damage, late complications and mortality – I am not ready to kick the bucket yet.

It is better not to enrich oneself too much via the 'whats app university'.

“While healthcare service personnel are duty bound to serve without discrimination, the cooperation and support from society is a fundamental need for them to perform their duties with confidence,”

— Ministry of

Health, Govt. of India

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THE APARTMENT NEIGHBOURS :

Panic stricken.

Demand sanitization (politely of course) of lift, common passages, our flat as well as our vehicle in the garage.

Is arranged by my family immediately, though expense for common areas is shared to be fair to them.

They ensure that my family is properly cooped up in the house.

THE CONVALESCENCE :

Fatigue- all consuming and improving at snail's pace.

The future- looks bleak. What does it hold in store for me?

THE REALIZATION :

This account will be incomplete if I do not acknowledge the help, good wishes, concern, empathy and encouragement I received from family, friends, colleagues, students, teachers, acquaintances, even my maids and driver.

I am overwhelmed and consider myself truly blessed.

I am filled with hope.

New drugs are coming up, vaccines are round the corner, the untiring endeavor of humanity to fight adversity continues- so all is not lost.

But what is very important is all sufferers of COVID19 may not be as privileged as I am, hence some discussion about this burning problem.

DISCUSSION :

Searching through literature to cope with my own insecurities – I find voluminous and thought provoking articles on the psychosocial impact of SARS-CoV2 infection.

There are variable effects on the different sections of society like children, elderly subjects, health care workers, marginalized communities, known psychiatric patients apart from general adult population.²

The manifestations may range from panic, anxiety, obsessive behavior, hoarding, paranoia, depression even psychosis and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).³ The most stressed, anxious, and depressed people are those who are in a relationship but not cohabiting, followed by single individuals. Those who have children show lower psychological impact, stress, anxiety, and depression than those with no children⁴

The so called 'infodemic' disseminated by the innumerable social media platforms seems to be aggravating these problems even more.⁵

Stigmatization, xenophobia, isolation, quarantine,

loss of control over ones' life, financial insecurities, ill health and loneliness are the main factors that are leading to the psychological turmoil.^{6,7}

In case of medical professionals are added feelings of vulnerability due to lack of definitive therapy and prevention, feelings of worthlessness and guilt, fear of infection, separation from family, overwork, assault from patient relatives – all resulting in early burnout phenomenon.⁸

The WHO has released advisories to cope with the psychosocial epidemic which goes hand in hand with the viral pandemic. The 'm h GAP Humanitarian Intervention Guide' is a ready reckoner consult for health care workers to address mental health conditions.⁹

The mainstay of management is an empathetic counseling support to patients and families, along with a healthy lifestyle modification advice involving diet plans, exercise and avoidance of substance dependence.¹⁰⁻¹²

CONCLUSION :

A comprehensive holistic approach is necessary to deal with this scourge. Apart from medical therapy, diet and lifestyle advice, counseling for morale boost up, and social rehabilitation should become part and parcel of COVID19 management.

‘وتلّم نزلنا ساءة ارمي او بالسي أس/ المنرخ’

[Plague was dangerous, but quarantine was more dangerous : Rajendra Singh Bedi].

JIMA, Editorial, June, 2020

Untouchability — Other Face of Pandemic

JIMA, Editorial, June, 2020

“Unsung Heroes of India's Corona WarWrite their history now".

**Dr R V Ashokan
Hon Secretary General, IMA**

JIMA, Editorial, June, 2020

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