



Guest Editorial

What it means to be the daughter of a corona warrior?

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The SARS-COVID 2 or more elaborately, the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus 2 took the world down during the transition of time from 2019 to 2020. All the pre-planned dreams of post exam vacations and parental time were sabotaged when the WHO finally declared it is a pandemic. This was a very small-scale heartbreak. This virus, due to its infectious nature, shut people down in their homes during the lockdown causing major economic and global disruption, the largest global recession since the Great Depression.

Epidemiologists spoke of the Epidemic in terms of waves with the subsequent establishment of world-o-meters to track the numbers required for graph formulations. India was initially not on the hotspots list but eventually made it to the top five, owing to the population density, level of precautions and the social perception of the virus. When there was a rapid surge in the number of infections in India, I was in Poland attending med-school online, which in itself is such a bizarre concept for me. Knowing that the management of this virus includes airway management, intensive care and anaesthesia, I was quite sure that my mother and several others would be called for.

Finally, when Lok Nayak Hospital, Delhi, declared into a dedicated and India's largest COVID hospital, I realised that my mother was going to be a warrior in this battlefield. When I found out about the high-risk groups, which include people with Hypertension and heart problems, my

heart sank. My mother exhibited these illnesses, which in everyday life were quite trivial, were now risk factors elevating the chances of severe infections in case she exposed to and infected with the virus. Imagining my mother donning and sealing her airways with the N95 masks, walking into a room full of virus was heart breaking. I spoke to her on video call every single day and discussed the prophylaxis and management of the virus while understanding the mental condition of innocent lives, which were suddenly losing control over their breathing and oxygen saturation. The fact that the fatality rate was 1-2% brought relief but knowing that in case fatality does happen, your family does not even get to see your body, brought immense pain.

When I cleared my exams and was able to secure a seat on a chartered flight to Delhi, it was a relief. I could not wait to reach India but to find that my mother will not be waiting for me at the airport and would be confined to a different floor in our house post duty hours was heart breaking for me. I saw my mother from the window as she came in. She had just come from the hospital after spending hours in the ICU, giving the WHO/CDC recommended oxygen therapy and medicines to hundreds of COVID patients. In addition, her duty was not limited to her traditional 9am-5pm hours as expected in a government setup; rather it was multiple cycles of 24x14 hours at a stretch responsibility until corona ends. Hearing her from upstairs on her quarantined floor taking calls all the time, may it be the evening or the night hours looked tedious and demanding. I learned to be unfazed

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from such hardship. What seemed impossible to me in the 22 years of my life, was now accepted by my mind as a lifestyle, I am supposed to follow for probably the rest of my life.

Being the lady of the house, she was trying her best to participate in the household responsibilities at least by telephonic instructions to us. Multitasking is what I learned as a precious lesson. My mother would take ICU rounds, not only in the hospital, rather, even at odd hours on video call. I could hear from her conversation, that some of her patients were extremely fond of her, to an extent, that they desired to complete their treatment under her supervision and requested to not be moved to another ward or hospital. To hear her in argument with the system, for better quality care of the ailing patients made me realise the amount of empathy and strength a doctor is supposed to have. I wish I could develop such hypervigilance and management abilities. However, medicine is not only healing and empathy. It is also about administration, knowledge and precision. This was a lesson learnt by observing my mother, putting down all the patient data with extreme accuracy in the required software, to aid the national statistics and epidemiological surveys.

Being a doctor does not finish here. It is also about good leadership qualities. My mother led a huge team of residents and paramedics and was able to keep their enthusiasm and morale high all the time besides being their guiding force. Would I ever be able to have such a multidimensional personality as a doctor? When her 14-

day quarantine commenced, she tested for the virus after 5 days and luckily found to be negative. The first thing I did was to embrace her while simultaneously preparing myself that I will be experiencing her physical proximity only for 9-10 days at regular intervals for all the 3 months I will be here. Taking care of my 82-year-old grandmother, taking all the responsibility of household chores, feeding the pets and cooking with my father made me a more mature, independent, responsible and whole-some individual.

This Pandemic made me realise that heroic acts are not what the media has sold to our minds for decades. True heroes live among us, disguised as doctors, soldiers, policemen and many others, who during global crisis fight for the lives of people, putting their own lives in danger. Therefore, when I packed for Poland to start my new academic year, and put my mask and face shield, I was ready for the world as a fighter woman with a very high spirit in the medical field.

Ready to put my life through chaos to save others. I finally found wonder woman in myself, after seeing the legendary woman who birthed me.

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