

President's Column

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by Adj Asst Prof Tan Tze Lee, President, 27th Council, College of Family Physicians Singapore

Healthcare and the medical fraternity have been forever changed by COVID-19. We may have made great advances and discoveries in medical sciences in the 21st century. However, the arrival of this novel coronavirus has stressed the global health system to near breaking point. In the case of COVID-19, we have had to resurrect the age-old public health measures like hand washing, social distancing, and the wearing of masks in order to contain and reduce the spread of the disease. Some in our community have found these measures onerous and unacceptable, measures that are now the mainstay of our defenses in this public health emergency. Thankfully, there is evidence that these measures are effective in our fight against COVID-19, and this is very encouraging for the majority who have doggedly followed these measures.

As we enter into the 9th month of this pandemic, many of us are already feeling the fatigue of this long drawn battle. Thankfully, with the proliferation of social media, we have been able to keep in touch with and support each other during this crisis as never before. The ability to share experiences, to know that we are all going through the same challenges brings much needed relief. We need to be ever mindful of the need for selfcare, as well as the mental and physical well-being of our colleagues. We need to stay the course and support one another, as this current situation will need time to resolve.

What lasting effect will COVID-19 have on our medical education? Perhaps, as suggested by Prof Tikki Pangestu, Prof Chen Zhi Xiong and Prof Chong Yap Seng of YLLSOM in Training doctors for a post-pandemic world⁽¹⁾, there may need to be shift in focus in medical training. The "narrow view of clinical competence will not be enough", and a more holistic view, with critical thinking and a global mindset may well be needed as we step into a post-pandemic world. Last, but not least, we need a healthy dose of empathy and humility as we seek to guide the education of our trainees. I couldn't agree more.

This issue's articles focus on the experiences of our FPs during this COVID-19 period. We report on Temasek Foundation's Pilot providing Swab Booths for our GPs. Dr Michael Lim interviewed Dr Gregory Ko and A/Prof Tan Boon Yeow on their "primary care experience during Pandemic". Dr Aziz of his experience at Singapore Expo. Dr Charity Low reported on the use of Zoom teaching for medical students, as well as CME webinars. Dr Lois Hong gives some tips for communicating with migrant workers, and Dr Ng Liling reports on the new normal in community hospitals. These articles are most insightful, and show the depth and breadth of the substantial contribution of our FPs and GPs in fighting COVID-19. We are most grateful for their sharing, and I hope that you will, like me, find within them precious nuggets to take away.

¹ <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/training-doctors-for-a-post-pandemic-world>

■ CM

heart rate and ECG are normal. He advised me on food and gave me some medicine. Now I feel fine.

CM: What did you do all day when you are in isolation?

ML: In dormitory we could not leave the room at all, every day we just use the phone in the room. In [Isolation Facility] we could go *jalan-jalan*. Now I am waiting [in another Facility] for MOM approval- maybe this week I can start work again driving.

I still have this question, how I can get coronavirus when I did not leave my room for 3 months and nobody else in my room was tested positive?

CM: Did you ask the doctor who tested you?

ML: I did. He said, "I can only check COVID, I can't answer questions!"

CM: Many people have tension or stress during COVID time. Do you know anyone like that?

ML: No. The first time, my friend said "Everyone is dying from this illness", but I know in Singapore people recover, now only 27 have died. So I was not feeling that way.

CM: If you can have three wishes for all the brothers working in Singapore, what are they?

ML: For me I only focus on my work and support my family. I don't think about any other things. Four months no work already. I want to go back to work once MOM approves.

This short conversation revealed both Mr L's priorities and my pre-suppositions. At a time when health anxiety is widespread, his main concern is a safe return to work. While I have met other patients who expressed significant COVID-19-related anxiety, Mr L's sentiments are consistent

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