

## **EXPERIENCES OF A SOUTH INDIAN NURSE DURING THE COVID WAR**

\*Corresponding Author,

Perianayagi Palavesam

Madras Medical Nursing Colleges, Chennai and

Sheriff DS, Anna Medical College, Mauritius

**Covid Duty in First Wave:** On March 31<sup>o</sup> I was in the first nurses' team, Namakkal Head Quarters Hospital, Tamil Nadu to give care to clients affected with a newly detected viral infection named as Covid-19, which is highly contagious with higher mortality. When I got to know that I was posted in Covid duty, I was worried about the disease, quarantine and about my infant as I was more prone to get the disease. I believed only the knowledge and skill which was gained through my profession. As it was a new difficult situation, I couldn't discuss about that with anyone. I told myself that, "I am a brave nurse and I can handle this situation very well".

During the Covid duty night shift, the medical block in which the clients were admitted was isolated, even a single person other than me wasn't permitted to enter into the zone. I entered into the block with the Personal protective equipment and N19 mask and hood. I felt very hot and hypoxic immediately wearing the suit. I needed a few minutes to adapt to that suit. I was frightened how I am going to be in that suit for 6 hours. There was no one to help me, If I fainted. With that fear, I was walking. The clients were in separate chambers rather than in general ward. The ward setup was changed. Equipments were displaced. I had entered into the ward and met the clients. It was very difficult to communicate with them and also with my hospital. I had entered into the ward and met the clients. It was very difficult to communicate with them and also with my hospital.

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I had entered into the ward and met the clients. It was very difficult to communicate with them and also with my hospital team by mobile phone as I was in that suit. The clients were asymptomatic and vital signs were stable. No helping hands in my duty to do work. I was the only person between the clients and the world. As they were asymptomatic, they frequently asked about the reason for isolation and asked for discharge. I had to explain to them repeatedly and carefully. I had to report to the team members only through my mobile phone frequently. Without adequate communication, everything was difficult. I have to walk with my own sweating collected about 500ml within my leggings. I was exhausted with dehydration more than loss of energy. The clients were slept quietly but I was ready to face any emergency at any time. When I completed my duty successfully I have to doff the PPE with more caution. I had the fear of exposure within me. After doffing, I could take breath adequately but I needed energy and rehydration. I was in Quarantine in my hospital during my Covid duty. My family members were worried about me. In coming days, the situation became worst with major number with more caution. I had the fear of exposure within me. After doffing, I could take breath adequately but I needed energy and rehydration. I was in Quarantine in my hospital during my Covid duty. My family members were worried about me. In coming days, the situation became worst with major number with more caution. I had the fear of exposure within me. After doffing, I could take breath adequately but I needed energy and rehydration. I was in Quarantine in my hospital during my Covid with more caution. I had the fear of exposure within me. After

with more caution. I had the fear of exposure within me. After doffing, I could take breath adequately but I needed energy and rehydration. I was in Quarantine in my hospital during my Covid duty. My family members were worried about me. In coming days, the situation became worst with major number of loss of lives. Every patient was in oxygen support, Most of them were in respiratory distress. The duty was very hectic. But the progress in patient condition was very poor. Each and every effort and resource had failed in front of Covid Virus. We were upset because of the endless crisis. Deaths among various age groups were painful. I can't forget the death of a teenage boy who had an ambition to become a doctor. As a mother, I could realize the emotions of his mother due to the unexpected death. In most of the time, I was the only person with the patients during the last minutes of many lives. In completing each duty, I missed the conversation between patients and me and job satisfaction. Even though I was very tired after completing duty, I was sleepless due to the numbers of death in every duty. News regarding treating medical personnel by public was annoying. I avoided to talk with my neighbor. After few days only, people realized our sacrifice.

**Covid-19 Second Wave:** In February 2021, after | got transferred and posted in the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, the largest hospital in Asia | felt proud to look at the three tower buildings and work at the institution. In few days, the second wave of Covid had come and | was posted in Covid duty without exemption. Though the health system had prepared to face the second wave, it was insufficient due to sudden increase of incident rate. The public had realized the seriousness and they cooperated to the public sector. We

had enormous supply of drugs and equipments. When | was coming to duty the Poonamallae highway the busiest route was seen with essential duty vehicles and ambulances. When | reached the entrance of RGGGH, | could see the long queue of Ambulances and technicians with critically ill patients waiting for admission. The casualty team had come into the ambulance and gave care to the patients. In a night shift, | had to take care of more than eighty sick cases with oxygen support as a single nurse. Always patients with oxygen cylinders on the stretchers, were waiting for bed. The beds were vacant not due to recovery, but only due to death. All patients were afraid of death. | could not meet the same patients in the same ward on the next day. More than forty five deaths were registered in 12 hours of night in the hospital. The mortuary was full. In our ward, only one female worker was there to help to pack and shift the dead body to mortuary. Most of the patients had no relatives. | was running throughout the night shift for 12 hours. Most of the patients were in pathetic situation, | understood, but couldn't show empathy towards them. Many teenagers lost their parents and did not know to handle the situation. Even now, | can recall the crying face of a teenage boy, a single child who lost his both parents within a week due to Covid. He did not know whom to contact for help, where to go and what to do. Another 25 yrs young man who was gigantic without any co-morbidities, daily asked me when he will recover. | replied him that very soon as he had no risk factors. After some days, | saw him connected with Artificial Respirator and replied the same with holding his hands. Even though, antiviral therapy was started to him, he was no more. After implementation of so many preventive measures, and vaccination the situation came back to normal and the selfless

service of public servants were recognized. The queue of ambulance in front of casualty couldn't be seen. | continued my routine duty. But | felt satisfied to be a useful citizen to help to my country when in a critical situation, and utilize my knowledge gained through education to serve the needed. During those challenging days, my innocent lovable mother made a phone call and said that her friends and neighbor praised me and she was proud of me for being a nurse and working brave to save lives of people. She also blessed that | will be healthy always and God will be always with me and not to bother about anything. | thanked her for not to be an ordinary mother and saying be safe.

**“A woman rejoices at the birth of a son, But more when heis praised”-**

**Thirukkural 69**

P.Periyanayagi,Staff Nurse,

Namakkal Govt.Head Quarters Hospital,

Namakkal ,Tamil Nadu.



P.Perivanavaadi.Staff Nurse.

