



# A Nurse's Reflection on Covid Pandemic - The Hard Reality

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## Editorial

Volume 4 Special Issue 1

Received Date: September 21, 2020

Published Date: October 01, 2020

DOI: [10.23880/nhij-16000S1-005](https://doi.org/10.23880/nhij-16000S1-005)

The Covid\_19 pandemic hit the world like a tsunamic wave which has compelled us to live in the new reality. The initial shock and puzzlement gradually vanished as we eventually learned to endure living with this grave novel virus. The world was unprepared and ill-equipped to fight this unexpected pandemic. Governments suffered to deal with this unanticipated situation but the health care professionals especially nurses were the front liners who had to bear the brunt of this pandemic.

During the initial stage, my fear began with my duty assignment. Every day, I wondered whether I would be assigned in the Covid or non Covid zone. Those days when I was placed in the Covid zone, I had to mentally prepare myself to manoeuvre the turmoil while on duty. Overtime, I have conquered it and the donning and doffing of PPE has become a second nature to me. I am also accustomed to shouting while I speak to colleagues through my visors and face mask in order to be heard. At the same time, last few months have taught me the significance of nonverbal communication like gesturing, smiling, lip reading and facial expressions which helps to a great deal in communicating with my patients. Even though the mask conceals my smiling face, I have learnt to smile with a shine in my eyes. This barrier was especially challenging for patients waking up from sedation, in a state of confusion who might have wondered if an alien stood next to them with all the PPE's on. Besides, it was difficult even for conscious and oriented patients to recognise any of us without our written name and designation on the PPE suit.

During these trying times, many staffs that have had no previous experience of working in an ICU were redeployed to the ICU with various training. The support team helped us with the basic nursing needs of patients; it was an overwhelming experience for them and a new working environment for us. Nonetheless, all of us gave our best.

Patient's families are an integral part of patient care and their role is irreplaceable. Unfortunately, due to the high risk of infection, families were not allowed at the bedside and nurses had limited contact with them through telephonic conversation. Talking over the phone with the family members was extremely hard because the mask hindered our communication resulting in talking repeatedly and listening patiently until the information was accurately passed on to each other.

Furthermore, the masks caused pressure sores, the full PPE in warm weather caused immense perspiration, dryness of the eyes and exhaled air circulating in the goggles caused fogging making it tough to see as well as read. There was also dryness and scaling of facial skin which were all tough but unavoidable given the circumstances. Dryness of hands has become quite normal due to the frequent hand washing being practised by everyone.

Even when I was chosen to be a floater at work to assist outside the Covid zone as a clean runner, I had to be vigilant while providing articles to the Covid zone. Taking utter most care to prevent cross infections by keeping the 2m social distancing at workplace and decontamination of articles once outside the Covid zone were dealt with extreme caution.

Even with the full PPE on, I frequently wondered if the PPEs are 100 percent effective in protecting me from this deadly virus because when other healthcare professionals contracted the virus, I could not resist but think if I would be next one!

Another challenge for me on the personal front was taking actions to safeguard my family during this pandemic. I had to shower as soon as I reach home before I could hug my loved ones and take precautions to prevent Covid infections

in the household.

Despite all these hard times, I frequently thanked God for keeping me healthy. I always felt happy and proud when Covid

patients had a smile on their face during their discharge from the ICU. That one smile was more rewarding than a million words. The respect I received from my patients, their family members and the public makes my every effort worthwhile.

