COVID-19 and Frontline Heroes: UAE Physician's Involvement

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The absolute reality of COVID-19 was the demand on health-care professionals for fighting the pandemic. I observed the self-esteem and strong-minded actions from every member in Dubai Health Authority to deliver the best care for patients. I asked those frontline heroes to express and write about their experience.

First hero: In the beginning of COVID-19 spread, many countries tried to shield and protect their residents from being on the front lines. However, they soon realized as the outbreak reached a pandemic level that this option is not a viable one in the long run, and if planned in a structured and organized way like it was done in the UAE, this experience and involvement could be greatly beneficial both to the healthcare institutions and for the residents themselves, irreplaceable. As an ophthalmology resident, my program specialty like many other surgical specialties was from the first ones to be affected, in terms of reducing outpatient clinics, greatly affecting surgical training as most of the cases are elective, and reducing of number of residents on the ground to avoid unnecessary risk [1].

When the call for volunteers was announced, I immediately enlisted and began with the first task of collecting the biggest numbers of volunteers to help in this pandemic, and after 1 month I ended up managing the allocation, logistics, and general affairs of >1,500 + medical and administrative volunteers across >15 locations in Dubai. I

participated as well in the setup of the first field hospital in the region, Dubai Field Hospital, in terms of assessing and providing medical manpower needs and to basic volunteering jobs such as fixing patient beds. In addition to that, I was involved in the examination and PCR swabbing of isolated patients in different facilities (hotels, medical assessment centers, isolation facilities, and clinics) and triaging them into different categories to allocate them to the best facility for their care. As an ophthalmology resident, it was interesting and refreshing to go back to our basic medical knowledge and read chest X-rays, use stethoscopes again, and read up on the management of pneumonia and use the words “bilateral crackles or crepitation” again after examining patients. When assessing and managing the patients, it was interesting to see how a young, but capable, country like the UAE adapted and adjusted its COVID-19 management guidelines to how the pandemic progressed in this population, keeping in line and even surpassing many developed countries [2]. Even though this experience paused my specialty training for 2 months, it added months of unique and invaluable practice to my nonclinical skills, including crisis and human resources management, team building, and leadership. The basic care we aim to provide, no matter the specialty is, and the medical oath we took when we started this profession, is a lesson I learned and will continue reminding me of the bigger picture of medicine. The expe-

rience gained by many other residents and me in the Dubai Residency Training Program (DRTP) is the silver lining during these difficult times.

Second hero: Being involved in this pandemic, as both a citizen and a health-care worker, has given me the rare opportunity to witness the true capability and measure of endurance in our society, from both the public and health-care settings and points of view. It is truly comforting to discover the capacity we have as humans to recognize, adapt, and evolve in the face of hardships, regardless of its shape and size. Being able to come together and support one another, all for a unified cause and greater good.

Doctors, nurses, and technicians of all nationalities and from virtually every department in DHA, civil defense, ambulance staff, police officers, public relations officers, and last but certainly not least the brute force of sanitation and disinfection by our cleaners behind the

scenes. Constant efforts and initiatives were taken by our organizations and government to ensure our absolute safety, happiness, and needs were met with no exception [3]. All of which I am ever grateful and thankful for.

Acknowledgement

We thank all the DHA frontline workers.

Statement of Ethics

N/A.

Conflict of Interest Statement

No conflict of interest to declare.

References

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