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Covid-19: Heroes of the storm

No storm is too great for nurses from Singhealth, as they continue to battle against Covid-19. PHOTO: SINGHEALTH

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During the Covid-19 pandemic, these nurses from SingHealth went beyond the call of duty by stepping up to serve in various Covid-19 care settings across Singapore

Putting aside their fears and working together to respond to the rapidly evolving situation while ensuring that patient care is not disrupted, these nurses experienced a renewed sense of purpose in their work, developed a sense of camaraderie with their teammates and rediscovered strengths in themselves.

MS ANURADHA RAMASAMY, NURSE EDUCATOR, NATIONAL HEART CENTRE SINGAPORE

Ms Anuradha (left) conducting N95 mask-fitting sessions for staff. PHOTO: SINGHEALTH

When Covid-19 first hit our shores, Ms Anuradha volunteered to conduct N95 mask-fitting sessions for staff at the National Heart Centre Singapore (NHCS) and Singapore General Hospital (SGH). She also prepared NHCS nurses for deployment to Community Care Facilities (CCFs) during the circuit breaker period when they operated as intermediate-care equipment (IMEs). Her work was critical in keeping healthcare workers safe and mitigating risks of viral transmission.

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What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?

Due to heightened infection control measures, there were changes to the workflow when conducting training. Regular distribution of the equipment and materials was hampered by the need to observe safe distancing measures. Also, we had to ensure that those completing with safe distancing guidelines. With this, I was unfazed or overwhelmed as I am a calm and efficient manner. I kept a positive mindset and accepted that this was going to be the 'new normal.'

What kept you going?

I thought it was fitting to manage my usual duties on top of conducting mask-fitting exercises for so many staff, the gratitude of my colleagues, their eagerness to learn, and appreciation for my work – receiving a record-breaking – or rather, my own record-breaking – 1,000 masks sanitised. I was also very touched when members of the public colleagues and I were providing aided after we, and walked on well. The support of everyone was very encouraging.

MR MUHAMMAD ROHMAN RAZALI, SENIOR STAFF NURSE, SENGKANG GENERAL HOSPITAL

With timely updates on the evolving Covid-19 situation, Mr Rohman was able to adapt quickly to the changes to ensure the safety of patients. PHOTO: SINGHEALTH

At Sengkang General Hospital's Emergency Department, Mr Rohman receives suspect and confirmed Covid-19 cases of the isolation area. He looks after these patients closely to ensure that they are not experiencing respiratory distress, and monitors their movements to limit contact with other patients. He also performs swabbing, swab samples and swabbing the discharge advice for fresh and Send House patients.

How did you prepare for your role?

"Regular and timely updates about the process changes due to the evolving situation from our management through e-mails and during roll calls helped us better prepare for our roles. These updates are important to help us tighten processes, such as determining area layouts and planning workflows, for the safe management of Covid-19 patients."

What was the most uplifting moment you experienced?

A unique version arrived me to visit him as a video call with his family back in India while I was taking his vital signs. His wife and son thanked me for taking care of him, and gave me words of encouragement. Although the interaction was short, it was meaningful.

MS LEE HUI LING, SENIOR STAFF NURSE, NATIONAL DENTAL CENTRE SINGAPORE

Ms Lee (left) on duty at a screening with the mobile swab team. PHOTO: SINGHEALTH

When the Covid-19 situation escalated, patients converged by designated ambulances to SGH were sent to the multi-storey carpark, which was converted into a fever screening and triaging area. Ms Lee was deployed there to do triaging, assessment and nursing interventions, such as taking vital signs, and performing electrocardiograms (ECGs). She was also attached to the Mobile Swab Team of nurses to perform swabbing and collecting, and collating and dispatching swabs.

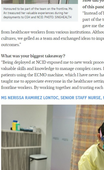
What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?

"Dealing to the needs of the migrant workers was tough due to the language barrier. To overcome this, we used pictorial charts and online translation tools to communicate with them more effectively."

What was your biggest takeaway?

"Different departments have different roles to play, but we share a common goal of giving our best care to our patients. It was an eye-opener to work with doctors, anaesthetists, allied health professionals and nurses from different institutions and specialties. This is a great experience that I am very thankful for."

MS GANCHALLE LAE GAH, SENIOR STAFF NURSE, SINGAPORE NATIONAL EYE CENTRE



Ms Ganchalle usually works at the Day Ward at the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) but was deployed to the triage area at SGH's Emergency Department, where she assessed patients who were suspect Covid-19 cases and assisted in collecting swab specimens.

Ms Ganchalle (centre) with her colleagues at the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) who were deployed to the triage area at SGH's Emergency Department, where she assessed patients who were suspect Covid-19 cases and assisted in collecting swab specimens. PHOTO: SINGHEALTH

Did you have any concerns when taking up this role?

"As the first line of contact with suspect cases, I was concerned because I was in a household of 10 people, with young children and elderly parents. But I strongly believed that there would be no issue if I adhered to infection control measures. I was also committed to contributing to patients, and made no effort to stay healthy and bolstered as much as possible. Caring for the sick is my call of duty, and I am willing to contribute wherever my service is needed."

What were your memorable moments?

"I felt very proud that I had the opportunity to put on the full PPE. During my deployment, I had to gown up whenever I attended to patients – now I can even do it with my eyes closed. I also felt a sense of camaraderie with my colleagues as we had to work in full PPE and work extraordinarily to show kind responsiveness for, in times of crisis, reassuring among healthcare workers is especially important."

MS VITHYA KULASINNAM CHANDRASEGARAN, SENIOR STAFF NURSE, KK WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Ms Vithya provides nursing care for suspect and confirmed Covid-19 patients in the KK Women's and Children's (KKH) isolation ward, where she performs nasal swabs and monitors their conditions. She also looks into the psychological and emotional well-being of patients and caregivers by taking time to explain the conditions and treatment options, pampering caregivers in their child's care, and sharing stories of patients who have recovered.

Among suspect and confirmed Covid-19 patients in the KKH isolation ward, Ms Vithya provides nursing care for suspect and confirmed Covid-19 patients in the KK Women's and Children's (KKH) isolation ward, where she performs nasal swabs and monitors their conditions. PHOTO: SINGHEALTH

How did you feel about caring for Covid-19 patients?

"Initially, I felt nervous. But I knew I needed to be brave. It helped to be doing this with my team with strong support and encouragement from my supervisors and senior management. By conducting briefings to address concerns and ensuring that we were trained on each procedure and practice, we were trained on each procedure and practice, we were trained on each procedure and practice,