

EDITORIAL

Life from the other side

Nadeem Qureshi



It has been a year since our worlds were turned upside down by the COVID 19 Pandemic. It has affected our lives not only personally but also professionally. For many of us, it took our loved ones, for others, it became mentally and physically exhausting. But as we reflect on this last year, amongst the isolation of social distancing and quarantines, I remain in awe of how we have weathered this pandemic together. As not only a global medical community but truly an extended family. It has been a year since I was extubated after having been intubated for 23 days of which 11 were on Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO). I do not remember many of those days but when I was finally discharged, I came to learn about all of the love and prayers that so many of you sent from the world over. Besides relaying my overwhelming gratitude for every single one of you, I also wanted to share some lessons from the other side.

As medical professionals, we are often hyper focused on making the right clinical decisions. We rely on our education and training and look for the most up to date literature and information to help guide us make the best decisions for our patients. This commitment to our training makes us sound clinicians, but practicing medicine extends past our clinical acumen. In the early days of the pandemic as little information was truly known about the virus, what mattered most, was the empathy each of the physicians and their teams showed me. The importance of recognizing that I was a person and not just an illness to be treated, was paramount. One morning, as my calves cramped, the attending intensivist physician personally massaged my calves to relieve my pain. That degree of attention and care will never be forgotten and I pray that I too will remain mindful of being empathetic to a patient's pain and their discomfort.

Our responsibilities however, do not only stop at the patient, but also must include their families. Clear communication with a patient and their families allows us to create that patient-physician bond that is imperative to the healing process and I would have been lost if it were not for the constant communication my family and I received from each of my physicians. Emphasizing these relationships not only makes us better physicians but can also improve patient recovery and healing; it certainly did for me.

Lastly, we have been engrained on evidenced-based medicine, but we are not all knowing. We are not magicians or wizards, but rather humble professionals shackled by the limitations of our literature. Herein, and recognizing these limitations, the importance of prayer cannot be forgotten. As I write this in the holy month of Ramadan, I continue to say Alhumdulillah. Alhumdulillah for health, medicine, and all the prayers. As many of you know, my lab numbers and mortality statistics did not look favorable and to this day remain an anomaly for survival. I firmly believe that prayers from all of you saved my life and for that I am forever indebted to all of you.

We all have been blessed immensely to be given the opportunity to care for others in their most vulnerable moments. We have the education, we have the training, and we must never forget the power of healing, compassion, communication, and prayer. I'm sure if your patients get even half of what you showed me, they are in great hands. As this pandemic rages on, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and I, like so many of your patients, have you to thank for that.

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