



COVID-19: Experience from KEM Hospital, Mumbai

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King Edward Memorial (KEM) Hospital started treating COVID-19 patients in the first week of March 2020. It initially started with a single “isolation ward” and steadily increased to the first and then to the second floors of the heritage building of KEM. A lot of brainstorming, planning, designing the COVID-19 wards, procuring hardware, setting up of back-office teams, creating a “war room,” and putting together “attack teams” were integral components of a herculean task. KEM responded adroitly and started training all health care workers (HCWs) across ranks, that is, medical students, interns, and residents. We never knew how the silent virus was going to attack us. An alien pandemic needed swift action and an emergency policy.

Next, came the dismantling of individual system specific “unit” structure to have a single jumbo “infectious diseases unit,” with residents from all disciplines evenly distributed in all wards. Wards were added as patients started coming in hoards. Designing of COVID-19 wards, entry/exit challenges, crowd management, segregation of high-risk contacts, and frequent sanitization of hospital premises were all dynamic tasks that were addressed swiftly. A dedicated team of

coordinators focused on logistics, disposables, consumables, donning/doffing areas, provision of food/water to patients, and disposal of biomedical waste. We also established a COVID-19 testing laboratory. Additional teams focused on care design of critically ill patients, analyzing deaths, and starting drug trials and vaccine trials. While addressing the pandemic, we continued to maintain our medical student and resident academic activities throughout the year.

The leaders of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) responded with open hearts. The passion to defeat the invisible enemy was palpable. The exuberance of residents working for a common cause in a multispecialty team of physicians was genuinely evident. Superspecialty residents volunteered to work in the ICUs. The nursing and other paramedical staff joined hands with residents to fight against COVID-19.

COVID-19 has hit impoverished countries with weaker health care systems the hardest. KEM Hospital was uniquely positioned to respond. This fight will be long, but it is one we can win, together.

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