

The Musings of a Corona warrior

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I wake up to sunny morning every day, knowing the job in hand. It's not a new job; I had administered informed consent before, done patient interviews before, performed phlebotomies previously; easy-peasy, you know, I have been doing dozens of them in a single day, just like that.

I open my eyes, look at my mobile messenger app. Thus reads the messages in COVID group:

"All supervisors, please start the site activities tomorrow by 9 AM sharp," goes the investigator. Such a cut-throat guy!!

And there goes my supervisor: *"Dear Corona Warrior (that's me!!), please be at the site by 8:30 sharp"*. Oh really???

Our usually lethargic project management team has decided to be superfast nowadays: *"The cab will arrive at your place at Narela by 7 AM to pick you up. On the way, you pick up lab supplies from Gurgaon and go to ESI-Faridabad; remember to collect PPE from THSTI"*. And then comes the last instruction: *"Please be there on time."* Who do you think I'm? Superwoman??

All these messages were sent last night after 11. And I had passed out by 9:30 PM. Now don't ask why so early. If you ask, I will make you accompany me to the Corona ward for 8 hours straight; then, you will stop asking such questions.

So, at 6 AM, I scramble up my things, take a quick bath, get some breakfast (not always successful in breaking it), pack some *rotis* for lunch and get ready for the day. A long day; a tiresome day; a frightening day...

Then I take the long road trip to my site. Oh, man! I'm already drained. There she is. My supervisor: rattling out instructions and handing out a long list of participants. She concludes: *"Dear Corona Warrior, please be gentle and kind."* Hey, are you listening to yourself?

Now starts the action. The hazmat suit. I still remember the first time I had worn it. Oh man, I looked like a star. I took selfies then, one from the top angle, another from the bottom. I even took one with a pout; except that it didn't show up through the N95 that I was wearing. I sent the super cool pics to my partner, who replied with a kiss. Poor thing doesn't know what I've gotten into. Having worn it for a week, I know how it feels. At the end of the day, you feel like the *aloo* inside a fried *samosa*. Well cooked.

When I've donned the suit, my supervisor gives a pep-talk, or at least that's what he thinks he's offering. Poor guy.



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Don't even start asking me about COVID patients. Another bunch of pathetic souls tired of being in isolation. I think I look like a funny cartoon to them when I enter the ward in my hazmat. They react in many different ways; some worthy to make it to this blog. Some are happy to see another soul from the outside world, some worried about what I will do to them, some young Romeos jeering at me, making fun of me, some indifferent. I go around what I'm supposed to do - do consenting, take interviews, and perform phlebotomy. All my usual work, but somehow, it's very tiresome in this situation. When I come out, it's 6 PM, and I'm tired, really, really, tired. Tired like never before.

Why am I doing this?

I don't know. I'm not looking at a policy brief with my name on it I'm not trying to get a scientific article from this work, I'm not a social media expert trying to gain followers and likes, I'm not a start-up trying to give a kickstart to my product, I'm not trying to win votes for my re-election. I do it because I'm asked. I do it because this is my job. I do it because I'm a Corona warrior.

Am I worried if I'm fully protected against infection? Am I worried if I will fall sick? That I will carry this home and make my family sick? Am I worried about my treatment if I do fall sick? Am I concerned if I'm adequately compensated for my hardships? That my contribution will be duly acknowledged?

I am. But no more than you are for me.