



## TREATING PEOPLE, NOT DISEASES

As General Physicians, we are the first port of call for patients with fever. Our team is working extra hard. We do shifts in the SARI (Severe Acute Respiratory Infection) and Isolation Wards in addition to our regular OPDs and ward rounds. **The pandemic has shown us the many dimensions of being a doctor – we treat not only the disease but the patient as a whole.** We tried to help those stranded in Vellore during lockdown, supported patients who needed food, wrote travel permit letters for emergency travel. We learned about the terrible conditions of migrant labourers who walked for days to reach home.

**Being a doctor on isolation ward duty is not easy. But being a patient in isolation is even harder. There are no windows or natural light, only a small vision glass in the door to see the outside world. Even the medical staff seem to be distant, especially because of all the PPE.**

*Dr. Sumi*



In addition to feeling ill and tired, patients are terribly worried about their families. Their entire streets are in quarantine, their homes in containment zones. They can communicate with their loved ones by mobile phone, but the news and social media messages make them anxious.

Some senior citizens don't have mobile phones, so they are extremely lonely. "You are like our grandchildren," they tell us. While the panic around COVID-19 is very real, we get a chance to do our every day duty as doctors.

One blessing during the pandemic is that because of the smaller numbers due to lockdown, we can spend more time with each patient, get to know them better, learn about their lives and families. We have time to counsel them if we have to break any bad news. When they are ready for discharge, **it is so fulfilling to say goodbye.**



*Dr. Susan*

I have been working in the SARI ward. We take samples from patients early in the morning and send them to the lab. I have taken nasal swabs for patients with influenza before, but I was still a little nervous when facing the first COVID-19 suspected patient. In my mind, I know we are well protected, and this helps me overcome the pang of fear in my heart. The nasal swab is deep and it brings tears to the patient's eyes.