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Listening Post

COVID-19: A perspective of a frontline worker

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COVID-19, is better known as Corona Virus Disease-19. Why 19? It is because it started in 2019 when it originated in Wuhan, China? Nobody has known about this disease until just recently. It was not in our medical or nursing books when we were in school. It wasn't in the book I read in nursing school and not in the current one either.

Now, everywhere you go, whether on the street, in grocery stores, the hallways of the hospital and specially at home on television; the story you hear and see is about this virus. In the beginning, everyone including myself, was not alarmed as the media presented it as less lethal than other virus outbreaks. Life went on, people travelled and went on vacation. It was not a big issue for everyone until the beginning of 2020 when, suddenly, it became widespread, grew exponentially and spread throughout all parts of the world.

So today, the impact of this disease which has been deemed by WHO as a pandemic, is being felt by everyone around the world. You can sense fear, anxiety, panic and even paranoia due to the expansiveness and uncertainty of this disease. It is tragic and most of us do not even know what to do and how to deal with it. In the early stages, symptoms of this disease can mimic allergy, flu and symptoms of upper respiratory infection.

The first question in my mind since the issue started is, "How can we slow down the process?" or as everyone is saying "How can we flatten the curve?" I read somewhere on the internet where a microbiologist was quoted as saying, "the virus does not move itself but we humans are the ones moving the virus." This is where all of us have to work together to get out of this pandemic. Each of us has a responsibility, to ourselves

and to our fellow human beings and we have to take it seriously. This is where social distancing comes in. Going back to my statement earlier, I can see why it makes sense to put a little fear in everyone's mind regarding this disease so no one will underestimate the fierceness of this virus since it is already widespread. It has killed thousands of people around the world including here in Canada and it is still not slowing down. Nobody is immune to this virus. There is no known cure or vaccine yet either. If we don't follow protocol and the correct procedures are not implemented, it will take a long time for us to get out of this dilemma and, worst of all, more people will die.

As a frontline worker myself, at times I feel the anxiety and fear. I fear for myself, my family/loved ones and my friends. We see other country's health care systems overwhelmed and having to triage treatment to determine who lives and dies. The threat of the shortage of supplies for protective measures increases my anxiety and fear. I am sure this is the same for the rest of my fellow frontline workers. The news you hear from the media about some health care facilities in North America running out of supplies and some health care workers succumbing to the disease due to a shortage of those supplies is just hitting closer to home. The truth is we frontline workers cannot take care of others if we don't take care of ourselves which means we have to protect ourselves. I hope our governments and our respective employers will keep that in mind and take that into consideration when they make decisions regarding the state we are in now because as of now things, are far from over.

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