**Title- Corona warriors - a tag of pride or prejudice?**

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**Abstract-** Violence against doctors is perpetuating even in the COVID-19 pandemic times. The authorities and medical fraternity are trying various measures to prevent and curb it. But the onus lies on the public to understand the prevailing conditions and change their behavioral patterns to avoid a demise of this noble profession

**MAIN ARTICLE-**

The Second World War saw Nazi forces ravage through Europe, spreading gloom, anxiety, fear, anger and uncertainty. During the ‘Blitz’, Nazi air bombers targeted industries in major British cities, causing civilian casualties. The people of Great Britain responded by supporting their warriors by whatever means possible. There were heartwarming tales like people ferrying the warring soldiers on private boats and providing the returning soldiers with food and shelter. The civilians did not blame their soldiers for ‘bringing the war home’. They knew who the real enemy was, and acknowledged that war was always going to ‘reach home’. The soldiers were their best hope.

Ever since the threat posed by COVID-19 pandemic was identified, eminent personalities and governments across the world have repeatedly likened the situation to a ‘war’. 1,2 ‘War-rooms’ have been established, and ‘war-time’ measures have been enforced. Health care professionals (HCPs) have been christened the ‘soldiers of mankind’ to joust against the seemingly invisible yet tangible enemy. But this ‘war’ is not the first that ‘Medicine’ has faced. In fact, the philosophical genesis of medical science was quintessentially to fight against the many faces of one enemy – ‘ill-health’. This war has never truly ceased. And HCPs have never paused to recover breath. Warriors as they may be, the risk that comes with facing the enemy up close is significant but not entirely new. In times of uncertainty though, this hazard further perturbs the already encumbered mind of HCPs. Consequently, fear and anxiety are unavoidable human emotions that the ‘soldiers of mankind’ have to deal with, especially because of their proximity to the ‘enemy’. This burden along with the physical fatigue that accompanies an inflated patient load during an outbreak becomes particularly taxing on both mind and body. Surely soldiers go through something similar or even worse. But what they inarguably do not face is the demoralizing backstabbing from the very people they fight for.

Incidents of HCPs in India facing mental and physical abuse from general public have happened fairly regularly, even during the battle against the outbreak. From getting physically beaten while buying groceries to losing access to their own homes, from not being allowed to cross borders to reach their hospitals to being physically abused while rendering community health services, from being pelted at with stones to being unapologetically spat at; the examples are aplenty. 3-7 Incidents like these are abhorrent and appalling. Soldiers should not have to fight the enemy and then be pelted with stones by the very people they are trying to protect.

The temperament of people involved in abusive incidents against HCPs is repugnant. No HCP asks to be revered or worshipped. In times of anxiety and uncertainty, all they ask from the people for whom they take all the risk, is to not make their lives harder. As a social community, people need to remind themselves who the real enemy is; ‘disease’, ‘illness’, ‘ill health’ or whatever name we might give it.

Violence against medical fraternity is not new. But the situation has been consistently improving with government addressing modifiable factors such as increasing the number of nursing and medical graduates and postgraduates, and widely improving out- and in-patient services in government run hospitals. 8,9 Then there are factors which are beyond government measures, such as the negative image repeatedly created by a viewership hungry media, and a psyche towards aggression with which people approach public health institutions. The toxic mental environment that is thus created, in overly burdened public hospitals, becomes the breeding grounds for frustration and anger, which are eventually vented by the kin on the treating doctors. To curtail violence against HCPs, the government of India reinforced the prevailing laws by an emergency national act meant to provide legal protection.10 Despite these efforts, cases of abuse have not perished. Is it because of a mentality of ‘doing the deed and getting away with it’? Given the threat of the virus, the need for a change in the attitude of the society towards HCPs is vital. A quote from the philosopher and author, G. K. Chesterton, seems apt here, ‘the soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him’. If the prevailing hostility is not amended for the better, the noble profession is bound to lose its charm. In the war against disease, saving ‘man’ would not mean victory, if it came at the cost of losing ‘humanity’.

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