

“When the Cherry Blossoms, we will meet again in Wuhan”: A Nurse’s Reflections

CORALLINE CUI YA PING

...My name is Coralline.

I am glad to share my experience with you. I have been working in the Intensive Care Unit of Nanjing Drum Tower Hospital for six years, and as of now, I have been in Wuhan for over a month. This is my experience:

Silence.

When we arrived in Wuhan on the first night, we had no idea what was going to happen. There were no pedestrians on the road, only a few ambulances occasionally passing by. It was eerie.

Sad and Nervous.

There are rules: Wear a mask for 24 hours; do not leave the ward; ring the bell if there are any problems.

On the second night we were assigned to the ward and began to receive patients. Actually, that night was the first time I wore protective clothing. After entering the isolation ward, I was a little nervous about simple things. For instance, what should I do if my goggles fogged up?

At 1am, it was cold...The knob on the clinic door shook violently as a patient tried to squeeze in. I was sad and a little nervous: the situation was grim.

Easy procedures become one of the hardest parts of the job.

When you're busy, you feel breathless, suffocated, and your breath starts to rush. The mask is stifling. When you stop, you start to feel cold, and tiredness creeps in.

The difficulties come after putting on the protective suit, and we wear this at all times during our shift. For me and my colleagues, in order to prevent the problem of needing to go to the bathroom, I choose not to eat or drink for four hours before work.

Some of the simplest nursing procedures become more difficult. Such as blood tests. If you can't see the blood vessels, you can't feel for the elasticity of the veins either, because I wear three layers of surgical gloves. Another thing people might not consider is if the goggles get foggy. Blurry vision can make nursing operations much harder. But we all know the rules, if you feel too uncomfortable you need to speak up and have to leave the isolation ward.

The saddest time for my patients.

When some patients need daily necessities, no family members can deliver them, because they are also in the hospital. In isolation. The harsh truth is that some families are sick and may be treated in different hospitals or departments depending on their condition. Some patients have lost family members and cannot see their loved ones for the last time, to say goodbye. We can only try our best to help them. To try and solve these problems.

Everyone in this pandemic is struggling. Everybody has a responsibility.

At 10pm on February 9, I got a phone call from my head nurse. It was a simple conversation: "The hospital will send medical staff to Wuhan tomorrow. Do you want to sign up?" I replied that I would. The Head Nurse asked me one more question: "Do your parents approve of your going to Wuhan?" I gave the same answer. I had told them before I would go if I was asked; but many people have asked me why I came to Wuhan, so I should explain, but it's quite simple: I have a sister and brother, and I'm single, so I'm very suitable to take up this duty.

A friend in need is a friend indeed.

The most impressive thing in Wuhan during this time of more than a month is that many strangers during this period have donated various life supplies to us. To our surprise, they had formed a support group and asked us what we needed. All kinds of daily necessities. Such kindness.

We all know that for a long time Wuhan was the worst place for this pandemic, but there are also many volunteers. The bus driver is a volunteer, responsible for taking us to and from work. Its a full time job because we are on 4 hour shifts and need buses frequently. Many Didi {Chinese Uber} drivers have also volunteered to take medical staff to and from work for free at this special time.

In our ward, the cleaning man was a young man who volunteered to come to the hospital. The charity and kindness during this time has been immeasurable. We have come to depend on it in our daily life.

For our patients, we all know that the relationship between doctors and patients is a little strained in China, but we all try our best to help them recover. Most of patients cooperative, and they are grateful for our presence.

A Poem:

We hope for the best.

Give your best effort, with the best attitude.

We are girls, no make up on our faces, but a protective sticker.

We are never weak. We are strong.

We contribute to our country in our way.

Lots of waterproof jackets, lots of sneakers, you can see in the hall.

They're our military uniform and boots.

My leaders live close to me.

My colleagues live next to me.

My friends live beside me.

The distance, still close, so far.

Night is followed by day.

This NCP war is going to end.

Make a wish.

When the cherry blossoms, we will meet again in Wuhan.

Free from all of this.

Unite, let us work together to defeat the pandemic.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

'Coralline' Cui Ya Ping graduated from Nanjing Medical University with a bachelors degree in nursing. She has been working in the intensive care unit of Nanjing Drum Tower hospital since 2013, and has been working in Wuhan as a nurse for the past two months.

On 9th February 2020, she volunteered to go to Wuhan to help attend patients in the Coronavirus pandemic. Coralline and colleagues will be living in a specific hotel, unable to leave for security reasons, until 2nd April 2020. She will need to be isolated for 14 days after she returns to Nanjing.