

Coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has disrupted medical care in a very major way. All aspects of medical care have been deranged. In many ways caring for patients suffering from the COVID-19 infection have been based on the principles of reverse barrier nursing.

Healthcare workers have to care for patients who are highly infectious and have severe complications caused by the infection. They also need to take care that they themselves do not get infected. Many healthcare workers globally have suffered immensely. They need to wear cumbersome personal protection equipment for long periods of time. They are unable to eat or drink anything during this time. They are also unable to use the toilet as well. These are stressful situations. These factors combined with social distancing have led to a feeling of isolation which results in depression.

Many patients suffering from the conditions other than COVID-19 infections are fearful of coming to hospitals for treatment. Hospitals have also had to gear up for this with elaborate strategies in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within the hospital itself. This has impacted medical care in the ways that were unforeseen.

Delay in seeking care has resulted in advancement of disease. This is particularly true in the context of cancer.

Many patients have delayed seeking treatment and thus went from treatable to end-stage disease. Many physicians have also been out of work. All these factors have changed the medical system abruptly and irrevocably. Many of us are struggling for solutions and treatments. Various treatment modalities like hydroxychloroquine and remdesivir have been met with considerable controversy. The best way to avoid getting an infection is to wear a face mask properly usually with a face shield, avoid touching your face, social distancing and frequent washing of hands. In other words prevention is better than seeking a cure.

Social media has contributed to the confusion surrounding treatment. The only treatment that will effectively be the treatment of choice is the vaccine. This too, while it is fast tracked, is a long way off.

We are now some distance from when the pandemic presented itself. Physicians and hospitals have now learnt lessons and are wiser. However with no definite treatment on the horizon COVID-19 is still a fearsome disease.

Dr Christopher de Souza

Editor-in-Chief

The International Journal of Head and Neck Surgery

Honorary ENT Head and Neck Surgeon

Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai

Consultant ENT - Head and Neck Surgeon

Lilavati Hospital and Holy Family Hospital, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India