

FFWPU UK: Heroes Within Our Community: Philip Fagcang

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Philip and Carmelia Fagcang

"Heroes Within Our Community" is a series of articles where we hear from those in our communities who are working on the frontline during this pandemic. This is the third article in the series: Philip's story.

Philip Fagcang:

"My name is Philip Fagcang and I work for the NHS as an Operating Department Practitioner; primarily in the Main Operating Theatre in the King George Hospital. We are known as ODP or an Anaesthetic Practitioner and part of our job is to help the anaesthetist secure the patient's airway during anaesthesia. After attending the Cosmic Blessing Event in Korea, I arrived back in the UK February 10th and immediately went to work the next day. However, I was sent home because I was

having flu-like symptoms. My manager and my colleagues suspected me to have the first case of COVID-19 in our department. I knew it was not COVID-19 but I did not argue. I followed the government protocol and isolated myself for 14 days.

I went back to work after isolation and found that there were a few COVID-19 patients in the wards. By mid-March the number of confirmed COVID-19 patients on ventilators was increasing. There were shortages of beds in the Intensive Therapy Unit (ITU) to accommodate the patients. Therefore, the Theatre Manager cancelled all planned and emergency surgeries and converted the Recovery ward and Paediatric ward as an extension of the Intensive Therapy Unit. All anaesthetic machines in theatres were used as ventilators. Theatres staff and Anaesthetic Practitioners were allocated to look after ITU patients due to the shortage of ITU trained nurses. Because of this, we had sustained exposure to the COVID-19 patients through constant contact with aerosols from the patient's mouth during intubation. It was scary. Some of our colleagues were infected and were sent into isolation; some recovered more easily while some took a longer time to recover.

I don't know exactly when I contracted the virus, but on March 30th I started to feel sick. I had flu-like symptoms but as days passed it became worse. I took paracetamol on a regular basis. On the third day I was vomiting and had lost my appetite. I was also dehydrated, and the smell of food was horrible. I suffered a gruelling experience of generalised body pain and weakness. I had a constant high fever and headache and I felt dizzy most of the time. I have been ill on many occasions, but I never experienced this kind of suffering before.

My wife [Carmelita] encouraged me to eat and drink as much as I could tolerate, and she helped me with steam inhalation. She reminded me about the benefits of positive affirmation and motivated me to get out of bed and push myself to drink concoction of ginger, lemon and honey that she prepared. I continued steam inhalation and gradually increased to three or four times a day. I did this regularly and slowly until I regained my appetite and my strength. Finally, the infection control nurse called me for a swab test, but the window of opportunity was gone as I was almost completely recovered already. The swab test results came back negative.

My children maintained their distance from me and my wife during this time. We put several sanitizer and Dettol disinfectant near the door and toilet. We taught them to avoid the potential spread of viruses at home by regular hand washing and the use of sanitizer. Luckily, they have not had any symptoms at all. It was difficult but the children were mature enough to understand the situation. We were in the same house, but we did not see each other because they were in their rooms for most of the time.

Reflecting back on my experience on this COVID-19, it was a difficult experience. I have been ill on many occasions, but I never had such an experience like this. The good thing was that my wife has been looking after me and the positive affirmations have helped me to have a positive outlook on life. It has helped me to lift myself up. I am one of the survivors of COVID-19. One morning, it was nice to see one of our COVID-19 patients in a video being discharged home. We [my wife and I] have made a difference in the life of our patients during this pandemic but on the other hand it is sad to see those suffering because of this situation."

If you yourself wish to share your own experiences over these past few months, please contact: pr@ffwpu.org.uk or fsfobbie@gmail.com