“If society can’t, nature will”: Corona

It has been a span of emotions and spectrum of events over the past month and a half. It starts with a difficult decision made by my husband to cancel his visit to meet his elderly mother in India due to the travel risk and restrictions caused by a virus named Corona. Many more events get cancelled, to name a few: fundraisers, birthday celebrations, conferences, meetings, vacations, family visits, medical appointments. Schools close and kids are at home and within a day there is a tremendous juggle of work, family and worry. The worry spans not just within the walls of the home, but for friends, peers, patients across and beyond the boundaries of the state and the globe.

As a health care professional who is in process of job change, there is additional uncertainty of wanting to belong and be useful, while waiting to see if the new work situation will work out as planned. There is apprehension whether my prior work family is safe and healthy and hoping the same for to be work family as well. As I barely grapple my new role as a tele-care provider, the overnight expansion of this virtual field has left me anxiously navigating new rules, regulations and policies of tele-medicine.

Last but not the least, it is painful to see and hear examples of hatred and exclusion towards Asian-American and elderly friends, family, patients and peers. To grieve in the stories of losses in the community and professional world, some to the virus and others to the spirit of the time.

And yet, amongst the chaos of fear, uncertainty, anxiety, sadness and grief, there is certainly so much more this universal pandemic has brought on. Family meals like never before, close knit celebrations, meaningful conversations, connections with friends old and new, forgiveness and most importantly compassion for self and others.

We can draw maps, create fences, walls, name shades of skin color, create a gender or age bias or a disparity based on socio-economic status. A pandemic does not care, nor will any other natural disaster or disease state. I certainly find myself bowing in humility to the power of nature.

As a flurry of kind messages, calls and e-mails from friends and family close and afar bounce in. As I find myself with this gratifying opportunity to provide care across state boundaries to patients in need during this stressful time and more importantly as I witness the resilience in many of them, as I see my two young children adapt and thrive in their home bound environment and as nature springs the first flowers of the season, there is gratitude like never before. Apprehension turns to courage and hope to get up every morning and say, let us give this day our best shot.

Today as we are shut down, in this state of isolation, there is a deep sense of connection, a profound sense of humility with gratitude and a hope that compassion, inclusion and growth have and always will create a balance in the community; that if society can’t, nature will.

-Kartiki Churi, M.D.

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