

MY ENCOUNTER WITH COVID

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I hope this document is something which nobody has ever used. I thought I should share my experience for what it is worth. My aim is to help increase some awareness and I will keep things factual

Monday 27th 2021

Finished my exercises and Came back from my morning walk and was feeling tired. I thought if I rested a bit I would be OK and get to work. That did not seem to improve things and I stayed home and cancelled all meeting with students and took more rest. That did not change things either and I cancelled all afternoon meetings and stayed home isolated. Not having travelled outside the campus. I was pretty sure things will be fine and was not worried. That evening went to the IIT Hospital and the first suspicion was Dengue. This was prevailing on campus and I had no travel history. So a bunch of tests were prescribed that evening.

Tuesday 28th

Continued isolation at home. Test results came in the evening and all the results were normal and Dengue was negative. I had a sore throat and that was the only symptom with a mild fever. I was advised to get RT PCR done at home. Called Lister metropolis for RTPCR sample collection at home.

Wed 29th

Lister usually comes between 10 am and 2 in the afternoon. They need a copy of Aadhar card and the test was Rs.1100. Results were promised at midnight that day. While I waited for the results for some time I went off to sleep.

Thursday 30th

Till 8 am there was no sign of any results by way of through email or SMS from Lister. We were trying to get in touch with Lister to get the results and their claim was the results were not ready. We got a call from corporation around 9 saying I had tested positive. Chennai Corp was willing to take me to Omandurar or gave the option of a private clinic. I decided on going to Cauvery Hospital. There is a fever clinic for covid positive patients. A screening test is done in the clinic. I fixed an appointment for the clinic at 10 am. The screening test involves blood sample collection for markers and a CT scan. Cost 10K. Got the tests done by 12:30 or so. Stayed back for the reports which came at 3 pm. The doctor saw my reports and told me the infection was minor a score of 4/25 which was low infection. I was advised Remdesivir treatment for five days. It looked like an overkill for a minor infection. This would require hospitalisation for five days Beds were not available in the hospital and so I was prescribed some vitamin C and other vitamin tables and a blood thinner and asked to go back.

The Redesivir suggested looked like it was the Pharma Mafia at play. I was hesitant to go in for the treatment and took it as a sign from God to not get the treatment done. I had mixed feelings about the effectiveness of the drug especially when infection was minor and other than age I had no co morbidities. All other parameters like oxygen levels looked normal and I was reasonably active.

Friday and Saturday 01 Jan I was feeling tired and temperatures were not under control. They were hovering around 102 to 104 and that was a cause for concern. Rooms were still not available in

Cauvery and then Geetha my wife was concerned that in case of an emergency I may not have a hospital to go to. We had lost a student to Dengue a young girl of 30 in October and there were some relatives and friends who had a close shave with Covid with oxygen levels plummeting down to Dangerously low levels before they recovered. Geetha was scared and found a number from corporation and they were willing to move to Stanley or Kilpauk or Rajiv Gandhi hospital. We were asked to choose and this was around 9 pm on Saturday. I was pretty sure nothing was going to happen and if anything the next day they would come and I would shift to the hospital if the high temperatures persisted.

Once Geetha had confirmed that we would go to Kilpauk in the next five minutes we got a call from ambulance driver saying he was on his way to pick me up. That got all of us by surprise and in the next ten minutes the ambulance was at our door stop. Caught in two minds and more for sentimental reasons than scientific ones I boarded the ambulance. I could have been stubborn and not got into the ambulance and waited for a day. But if things had spiralled out of control the person who would have suffered is my wife and I decided not to be stubborn about not going to the hospital right then. Besides working in the area of non-linear dynamics and bifurcations also played a subtle role since small changes could result in drastic outcomes. With all these thoughts in the back of my mind I got into the ambulance armed with all the reports esp. the covid positive report. The minute I stepped into the ambulance and was on my way the fever seemed to have gone off.

Reached Kilpauk Medical College KMC around 10 15 pm, the whole place was clean and things moved with smooth precision. Filled a form got an X ray and ECG done and was admitted to KMC.

The room was spacious and clean and a general ward. I preferred KMC to a private hospital since I was sure they would not subject me to Remdesivir unnecessarily and would discharge me in a day or so. The Dean of KMC was also known to us and that made me comfortable in KMC. You would not believe they started the Remdesivir treatment on Sunday Jan 2nd. On hindsight it appears like the remdesivir treatment is a part of standard protocol and should be taken in the initial stages of the infection to be effective. The other course of treatment consists of single dose of monoclonal antibodies. This is around 70K per dose the vial is usually shared by two people and if a second person is not found to share the vial then the cost the treatment is 140K. This is a single day hospitalisation procedure. The doctors decides the treatment depending on all the parameters she has at her disposal

A word about KMC . The medical fraternity was superb. The doctors and the nurses were true Yogis. They treated everybody irrespective of the strata of society with the same care and affection. This is something which was truly admirable. The room was an ICU with all facilities and infrastructure. Bathrooms were cleaned and spic and span. Cleaning was done meticulously twice a day. But being a general ward chance of cross infection are high.

The problems were decibel levels were high from 7 pm to 11 pm. Everybody busy on social media and listening to audio without headsets. The janitors would talk likely across the room . Other than these discomforts things were fine.

Room was 60 ft by 40 ft and very well ventilated. There were 30 beds in the room and when I went half of them were empty. Mosquitoes were an issue at night. About 10 percent of the patients I may have found in a private hospital and only 10 percent were really in need of critical support beyond oxygen. As the cases were increasing they immediately swung into action and got a similar room ready essentially doubling the capacity of the hospital. That was impressive.

IIT Hospital was also helpful following up and enquiring about my well-being and wanted to find out if

I wanted to shift out of there. Friends and well wishes were also supportive and these helped mentally overcome the crisis.

I was pumped with a heavy dose of antibiotics and anti-viral over five days and since I was looking like I could take all of that they discharged me at the end of five days. Thursday evening I was back home tired and weak. The taste of antibiotics and all medicines in my tongue.

I am recovering well thanks to all your wishes and prayers and hope to be back to normal soon.

Like I said I hope none of this is useful to any of you. But I hope this will at least make you not feel lost if you test yourself positive.

IIT hospital is a good source of help. We have a good team of doctors who can give good advice and would suggest you to use them as a gateway to the outside world should the need arise.

A word about testing

Not sure if these test results are even reliable. When my son developed fever again Lister came to collect the sample. They never told him the outcome. For a paid service this was not professional. When he called the corporation they informed him about he was positive by correlating with my positive result. Not sure if any of these tests are reliable and they have to be taken with a pinch of salt.

On the lighter side

Finally on the first day of the treatment the Remdesivir was being injected slowly. When I asked the sister she saw the drug and said sir this is Remd Easwar ad has to be added slowly. With Easwar being injected in me I knew I would recover.