

COVID Lockdown & Me

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'Doctor, could you please offer me an early pregnancy scan?', asked one of my patients in the midst of a countrywide lockdown in early April 2020.

With a heavy heart, I had to inform this 6 weeks' pregnant wannabe mum who had suffered six recurrent pregnancy losses that we were not in a position to honour our previous advice of reassurance early pregnancy scan due to COVID-19 measures.

During the COVID pandemic, there were many women in similar distressing situations that I, as a fertility specialist, had to emotionally support without the face to face connections we had in the past.

'When you see your dream that was just about to turn into reality becoming a dream again.'

COVID-19 stormed in our lives disrupting the routine and throwing some unexpected challenges.

I, for one, got redeployed going back in time to 'delivering' babies rather than 'creating' babies as a reproductive specialist. From showing a tiny would-be baby in form of an embryo just before embryo transfer to showing an actual baby at Caesarean section to the proud parents; my role had diversified but the joy it brought was amplified despite this pandemic.

My 17 year old daughter, Hazel was facing her own challenges with her high

school final A-level grade exams being cancelled but more importantly, from her view point, it was the loss of a dream to dress up and attend the school leaving PROM and a lockdown 18th birthday without her friends.

But more than these personal challenges, it was our patients that were in most difficult positions. I lead the egg and mitochondrial donor program at our centre. COVID-19 brought to a standstill the fertility journey of all the aspiring women and men especially those who were just about to embark on to their donor treatment cycles after a long wait to reach the top of the waiting lists.

The unfulfilled wishes of my patients those who were just about to commence their treatment cycles after a long wait, they had to put their dreams on hold again.

The kindness was in abundance though especially when these same patients said 'We hope you and your family stay safe and the hope you gave us so far, you are able to extend the same hope to those affected with COVID.' Let us meet after the COVID BREAK.

But the challenges brought with it a desire to bring about change, make a difference for the better.

In Prosperity we 'network' but in adversity, we 'connect'.

From creating lives to saving lives in our own capacity, joining forces to connect digitally. ESHRE 2020 once again showed its human face, it is bringing together all the global participants to share our stories, listen to others' stories, advance our knowledge and that too for free to its wider membership so that we stay connected to move science and people for brighter future and safer, high quality care in ART.

*-By Dr Meenakshi Choudhary
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