

Tackling Coronavirus – a researcher and doctor on the front line

I am a specialist registrar in infectious diseases and general medicine. I spend also some time doing research. Since the start of this pandemic, I have been involved in seeing patients with COVID-19 on the front line, educating and updating other colleagues at the hospital as well as research to characterise this new virus.

I am of Chinese ethnicity, with relatives in China, so in some ways, I have experienced this pandemic twice. Once when we were worried about relatives in China, and second when the pandemic hit the UK. I was one of the first doctors to see and treat the first patient with COVID-19 in Leicester.

In some ways, as someone so involved in the local response, it was not a surprise when I got COVID-19 myself. I knew instantly when I started getting fevers, chills, aches and pains. I was hopeful that I would get over the illness since I am young with no comorbidities. But after seven days of non-stop fever, breathlessness and coughing, I had to end up in my very own infectious diseases unit requiring oxygen, and eventually needing to go to intensive care.

Since discharge from hospital I remained at home for a month and a half recovering. The illness really knocks the energy out of you – I could only stay awake for a few hours at a time.

I am now back at work. I don't feel nervous at all about seeing patients with COVID-19 again. Instead, I feel more experienced. I think it is quite rare for a doctor to have gone through the experience of a disease, which he spends most of his time treating. I hope it makes me both a better clinician and academic.