

# Resilience in COVID-19

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In this unprecedented Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak, uncertainty and fear is spreading among various aspect of our lives. Some are worried about catching the infection and spreading it to their family members while others are worried about the financial impact on their livelihood when the economy is hit hard by COVID-19. Among our profession, doctors undergoing various Residency Programs are concerned about the possible delay in their upcoming sub-specialty examinations while senior doctors who are in the midst of planning their Health Manpower Development Plan (HMDP) saw their plans being shelved until further notice.

Our Government implemented the Circuit Breaker (CB) Measures with effect from 7<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and after two weeks, our Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong announced an extension of the CB by another month until 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020. Throughout this period, our Government has rolled out the COVID-19 resilience package: Billion-dollar measures to help Singaporeans tide through this rough period. So what else can we do to help ourselves during this unprecedented period? How can we increase our own individual resilience?

The College of Family Physicians Singapore has recently organized a four-seminar online course “Resilience in Times of COVID-19 for Frontline Doctors”. Seminar 3 focused on the Fear of the Contagion and was conducted on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020. Professor Kua Ee Keok shared with us the psychiatric perspective of fear and how we can handle fear. Dr Tan Yew Seng provided with us an understanding about the biological systems that mediate fear responses and how we can turn towards fear with awareness, kindness and curiosity. For those who may have missed the seminar, here are some insightful pointers from Dr Tan:

What may we learn by turning towards fear:

- When seized by fear, biologically determined responses overrides rational thinking
- Fear is however not inevitable and we can learn to self-regulate fear that is not adaptive
- Fear reminds us that we are at the edge of our boundaries
- Fear can tell us about who we are and how we deal with challenges

Strategies to build Resilience:

- Build Connections
- Foster Wellness
- Find purpose
- Embrace healthy thoughts
- Seeking help

So have you confronted your own fears and how are you going to build up your resilience level?

In unit 1, Dr Kwek Thiam Soo will bring us through the assessment and management of anxiety disorders in the General Practice Setting. A practical approach to a patient with Generalized Anxiety Disorder, incorporating the assessment of stressors and problems faced by the patient, DSM-VI diagnostic criteria, non-pharmacological and pharmacological treatments will be discussed.

In unit 2, Dr Tan Zhenwen Tina will bring us through the assessment and management of depression. The DSM-VI diagnostic criteria for Major Depressive Episode will be highlighted, the approach to assessing suicide risk and the non-pharmacological and pharmacological treatments will be discussed.

In unit 3, Dr Ong Kian Chung will bring us through the five “As” of smoking cessation. Common physiologically induced nicotine withdrawal symptom will be highlighted and treatment plan in a typical smoker’s clinic will be presented as well.

In unit 4, Dr Lum Wai Mun Alvin and Mr Kelvin Tung will be sharing on the continuing care of patients with schizophrenia in the community, how the partnership between the patient and primary care professionals is paramount in the optimal management of these patients’ chronic comorbidities.

In unit 5, Dr Rajeev Ramachandran and A/Prof John Wong Chee Meng will share with us the physical and psychiatric perspectives of eating disorders in adolescents. Screening of high risk individuals in primary care can be useful with SCOFF questionnaire and what are the indications for referral and hospitalization.

In unit 6, Dr Dennis Seow Chuen Chai and Dr Philip Yap Lin Kiat will discuss on the role of General Practitioners in helping caregivers of patients with dementia. Demographic characteristics that influence caregiver performance, stressors arising directly and indirectly from caregiving and factors associated with caregiver burnout will be discussed.

Under PRISM Section, Dr Ko Yong Sheng and Dr Tan Kok Heng Adrian will share with us Adult Tracheostomy Change in the Community. This original paper article will highlight the tracheostomy tube components, the size conversion between common manufacturers in Singapore, complications with tracheostomy and tracheostomy change considerations. This is a must-read article for doctors whose practice involved the care of patients with tracheostomy tube.

Lastly the selection of ten current readings by A/Prof Goh Lee Gan would supplement this GEP module. The selected articles covered a range of treatment modalities for mental illness in the Asia context and also include articles on Physician Stress and Burnout.