

Dear Friends,

For the information of our community members, we wish to update them as under:

1. On 23rd March, 2020, after Janata Curfew was imposed, it was followed by a country-wide complete lockdown effective 25th March, 2020. PGH however continued functioning normally, inspite of having only half the staff available in the hospital, while the other staff did not report for duty citing the sudden stoppage of the buses and suburban trains.
2. On 26th March, unfortunately, a patient who was in the hospital since 6th March, was diagnosed as COVID+ve and had to be shifted to Kasturba Hospital. That was the trigger for the BMC to immediately swing into action and they directed us to stop all new admissions till 15th April and carry out tests on each and every Doctor, Nurse, Ward boys and other individuals who came in contact with the affected patient and quarantine them. We were also advised to prohibit anyone, including patients' relatives, from entering the hospital. This created a huge scare amongst the staff and many of the remaining lower staff went home/ stopped coming to work. Some of those who were in hospital complex were somehow retained to ensure that the Hospital did not stop functioning. These staff members, largely lower staff and some Upper staff, had to be provided facilities for their stay, food three times a day and made to work double-shifts with overtime pay. As a gesture of goodwill, the management decided to give them ex-gratia amounts in recognition of their services during this difficult time.
3. During this period, Ministry of Home Affairs, State Government, ICMR and BMC got into high gear to contain spread of pandemic. Every day, all hospitals were flooded with plethora of instructions, rules and guidelines. These were enforced strictly by us.
4. With some relaxation in "lockdown 3", wef 20th April, we again started admitting Parsi Zoroastrian patients and also opened OPD for our poor patients needing replenishment of their regular medicines. This admissions and OPD services had to be curtailed again last week, due to absence of adequate manpower, including absence of many of the Consultants. Nevertheless, we plan to restart both in a couple of days.
5. In the meantime, some of the staff members who returned to work in beginning of May, brought with them infection from their community where they are living. BMC being hard-pressed for beds, asked the Hospital to use our own Isolation Ward and Step-down ICU, to treat these staff members. Fortunately, there has not been a single staff casualty. However, two of our own old and feeble, long-term ailing, free patients who had a number of co-morbidities, have succumbed to COVID infection.
6. During last two months, BMC has continued to exert pressure on all private hospitals, including PGH, and finally passed a Govt. notification on 19th May, for Private hospitals to provide 80% of their beds, including ICU beds and more space, for treating their Covid and Non-covid patients, who cannot be accommodated in government hospitals due to severe resource constraints faced by them.
7. At a time like this, when the entire Nation is struggling with this pandemic, our labour Union is playing truant and making various demands and threatening to disrupt Hospital's functioning. In fact, on our own, we have been looking after the welfare of our employees, including contracted staff, Badli workers and others, by providing them with all facilities, including free food and stay arrangements, in a clean environment, hospitalization as required and ex-gratia amounts. Yet, we find

the Union's behaviour quite unreasonable. Nonetheless, we are dealing with them and requesting them to see reason. It is important to mention here that hospitals are treated as "essential service" and there are penal provisions in Maharashtra Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) 2005, for disrupting Healthcare services. We have so far avoided taking any harsh action.

8. As mentioned earlier, for the last few days, we had temporarily suspended new admissions, except emergencies, in the Hospital due to skeletal staff. We are now planning to admit Non-COVID new patients from the Parsi Zoroastrian community, test and then treat them, as soon as staff strength permits. We are available in their service.

For and on behalf of The B D Petit Parsee General Hospital

H.D. Petit

PRESIDENT