

# Facing the Unseen

Category: COVID Redux

written by Angelina Sony | January 28, 2024

My very first close encounters with death were in the COVID ICU. I had just completed my final year in medical school and had entered my rotatory internship. The first two months of my posting were in internal medicine, and almost all the patients were COVID patients. The very first unit I was assigned to was the COVID ICU—a place where death was a constant presence. As a doctor who had chosen this profession to save lives and help people, I found it disheartening to be surrounded by death; it contradicted all my aspirations.

Some of those who passed away during that time are still in my memories. One patient who died in the ICU was the son of a patient who'd been admitted just 10 days earlier. I vividly remember seeing him when his parent was admitted. Tragically, when his parent was discharged, he was admitted to the ICU and passed away a few days later. He was a young man, leaving behind a family who had expected him to live for many more years.

I will also never forget a couple who got admitted one after the other; they were both in the ICU for about a week. Sadly, both of them passed away just three days apart. They were both on ventilators, unable to communicate or even see each other, despite being in close proximity.

The COVID pandemic claimed so many lives all over the world. It was a difficult and emotional experience for families who couldn't even touch or hug their loved ones in their final moments. Most of those who passed away were people who least expected it to happen.

Gradually, I adapted to the harsh reality of death. I learned to prioritize my mental health and navigate the pandemic and its accompanying losses. As the situation improved, with a decrease in fatalities, I transitioned to other rotations in various other departments. However, the enduring lessons and experiences from those initial days persist. I grew resilient in the face of adversity. I have faced many more deaths in my practice since then. It's a truth that young doctors must learn to confront—and accept—the unavoidable reality of death. It becomes an integral part of our journey in the medical profession.

*Angelina Sony*

*Kanhgad, Kerala, India*