Hope

I am a rheumatologist. I am NOT on the front lines of the pandemic, yet, but I AM scared.

I am scared for myself. I am scared when my husband and I discuss our advanced directives as he awaits a 'deployment' to the Intensive Care Unit. I am scared for my family, my friends, my colleagues and my patients. I am scared for the new normal.

I cope. I cope by maintaining a level of normalcy by conducting tele health visits. I cope by attending virtual yoga classes, making fresh pizza, doing silly dances with my nephew and listening to music. I am fortunate to be able to cope with all the above.

I break. I break when I learn my patient's wife passed away from COVID-19 after visiting Disneyland. I break when I hear about my friends and family members working on the front lines without adequate personal protective equipment. I break because patient's family members are not able to say goodbye to their loved ones. I break because there is a story in each death which has instead become a statistic.

I try. I try to examine for synovitis on a video visit. I try to calm my friends down when they call in the middle of the night, concerned they have contracted COVID-19. I try to stay optimistic.

I rage. I rage when my lupus patients cannot get hydroxy-chloroquine. I rage when people do not follow social distancing guidelines. Sometimes, I rage without a reason.

I grieve. I grieve each time I hear the news. I grieve at the loss of the warmth of a hug.

I am thankful. I am thankful for everyone who puts their life at risk to save us. There are way too many people to be thankful for. I am thankful for the altruism and love that surround me.

I cry. I cry because the enormity of the situation is too difficult to absorb. I cry at the surge of cases around the world and the surge of emotions inside me.

I contemplate. I contemplate about life, death, the uncertainties and the future. I contemplate about the collective experience we are all going through, courtesy of an invisible virus.

I contemplate about my identity as a rheumatologist and my role as a physician during a pandemic. My conscience pulls me to be on the front lines and help my colleagues. Dr Louis Lasagna mentioned in the modern Hippocratic oath, 'I will remember that there is art to medicine as well as science, and that warmth, sympathy and understanding may outweigh the surgeon's knife or the chemist's drug'.¹ I do my part by being there for my patients and by commiserating; I heal myself in the process.

I hope. I hope that once on the other side of the pandemic, undoubtedly damaged and scarred, to be more appreciative, humble, grateful and thankful.

I adapt. I persevere. I trudge onward.

Khushboo Sheth ^{1,2}

¹Department of Medicine, VA Palo Alto Health Care System, Palo Alto, California, USA

²Department of Immunology and Rheumatology, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California, USA

Correspondence to Dr Khushboo Sheth, VA Palo Alto Health Care System, Palo Alto, CA 94304, USA; ksheth@stanford.edu

Handling editor Josef S Smolen

Contributors KS is the sole author.

Funding The authors have not declared a specific grant for this research from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Competing interests None declared.

Patient and public involvement Patients and/or the public were not involved in the design, or conduct, or reporting, or dissemination plans of this research.

Patient consent for publication Not required.

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; externally peer reviewed.

This article is made freely available for use in accordance with BMJ's website terms and conditions for the duration of the covid-19 pandemic or until otherwise determined by BMJ. You may use, download and print the article for any lawful, non-commercial purpose (including text and data mining) provided that all copyright notices and trade marks are retained.

© Author(s) (or their employer(s)) 2020. No commercial re-use. See rights and permissions. Published by BMJ.

To cite Sheth K. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2020;**79**:986.

Received 18 April 2020

Accepted 20 April 2020

Published Online First 27 April 2020

► <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/annrheumdis-2020-217691>

Ann Rheum Dis 2020;**79**:986. doi:10.1136/annrheumdis-2020-217666

ORCID iD

Khushboo Sheth <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1681-3252>

REFERENCE

- 1 Hajar R. The physician's oath: historical perspectives. *Heart Views* 2017;18:154–9.