



## The NHS during Covid-19: Through the eyes of a novice IMG

*Samantha Rahman*

“Mind the gap between the train and the platform” The announcement reminded me that I was, indeed, in London and it was not a dream. I repeat, this was not a dream! Like many other IMGs before me, after a series of fortunate events, I had finally arrived and was able to serve in the prestigious NHS.

At this point, it had been around 2 months since I had started working in a hospital in South London. But some days it felt like it had been an eternity. It was hard to wrap my head around the fact that, I was 5000 miles away from home! I guess, most new overseas doctors feel this way at some point.

I started my NHS journey during the second wave of Covid-19. The world, as well as the UK, had seen the worst of it already, and was preparing to combat what was yet to come. I came to the UK from a hospital in my home country of Bangladesh. I thought I knew what I was getting myself into coming to work in the NHS - I'd heard such good things and I was eager to be a part of it. As the opportunity finally dawned on me, I bode farewell to my family with tears in my eyes and moved to UK with high hopes in my heart.

And NHS, oh NHS! You were all that I had heard of and so much more! Pre-Covid, Most NHS trusts had an induction period of reasonable duration, in which IMGs could be eased into the inner workings and system of the NHS. But unfortunately, as I was appointed during the pandemic, my learning curve had to be steeper. And trust me, I know very well, this is absolutely nobody's fault. We're all witnessing a chapter in history. However, the digitalized patient records, the multi-disciplinary input, the strict patient safety measures and other trust protocols- these were all very new to me. It will be a crime if I don't mention the generosity and kindness of my seniors and peers, who in spite of being overwhelmed with work themselves, helped me in their own ways to settle within the system in the shortest period of time; so that I was ready to take on responsibilities and serve the good people of the nation during this God-awful pandemic.

The best thing about my introduction into NHS was getting the Covid vaccine. I was lucky to be given the vaccine at the very beginning of my commencement. Thanks to the NHS, this made me reasonably more confident while working on covid wards. My parents back home were also somewhat reassured.

The work schedules during Covid were hectic, I was too tired to even eat and shower after long shifts sometimes, not to mention the immense toll each shift took on our mental health. Yet I was happy to be a part of it all. The greetings, gratitudes, thank you notes and posts from the patients and their families served as excellent motivators during hectic days.

Working in the NHS has opened doors to so many opportunities for me and my overseas colleagues which we didn't know existed and allowed me to develop many new skills. On the other hand, the

down sides include loads of paperwork - the regular renewal of residence permits and other legal issues do keep us IMGs worried. Some sort of assurance regarding those issues during these trying times would definitely boost our moral.

Nevertheless, I am honoured to be a part of the NHS, especially during these difficult times. And I hope to keep serving here for as long as possible. Here's to better days and a Covid free world.  
Cheers!