



ISSN: 2091-2749 (Print)
2091-2757 (Online)

Correspondence

Jenifei Shah, Foreign Students
Dormitory, School of Medicine,
Shanghai Jiao Tong University,
Shanghai, China
Email:
jenifeishah@outlook.com

Peer Reviewers

Prof. Dr. Nabees Man Singh
Pradhan
Patan Academy of Health
Sciences

Asst. Prof. Dr. Ashis Shrestha
Patan Academy of Health
Sciences

Submitted

27 Apr 2020

Accepted

28 Apr 2020

How to cite this article

Jenifei Shah, Jesifei Shah,
Javaria Nasir, Rewina Kebede
Girmay. Life during COVID-19
outbreak: perspective of
foreign medical students in
Shanghai, China. Journal of
Patan Academy of Health
Sciences. 2020Apr;7(1):104-
106.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.3126/jpahs.v7i1.28885>

Life during COVID-19 outbreak: perspective of foreign medical students in Shanghai, China

Jenifei Shah¹  ✉, Jesifei Shah² , Rewina Kebede Girmay² , Javaria Nasir³ 

¹Intern, ²Undergraduate medical student, School of Medicine, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China; ³Undergraduate medical student, School of Medicine, Shanghai Fudan University, Shanghai, China

This is the experience of medical students during COVID-19 in Shanghai; following the outbreak of corona virus and lockdown of Wuhan, China, on 23 January 2020, one day before the Chinese new year eve.^{1,2} Since then, the virus has been declared a global pandemic, and life around the world has come to an abrupt halt. On the other hand, things in Wuhan and China have started picking up, following lifting of the 76-Day long lockdown on 7 April.³ The recovery in China, Korea, and Singapore shows promise and hope for the rest of the world, to persevere and weather out the storm. Daily cases in China is in single digit now, and most are imported cases.⁴ Shanghai reported one imported case of COVID-19, zero locally transmitted case on Thursday 23 April, with a total of 339 locally transmitted confirmed cases, including seven deaths till date, and 1,618 imported cases in mainland China.^{5,6} No deaths have been reported from the imported cases.⁶

Jenifei- As an intern of Ruijin Hospital⁷, Shanghai Jiaotong University⁸, I was rotating in the ECG department when news of the virus broke out. I had a shift on the 26th but around 10 pm of the 25th, news of internship getting suspended surfaced. Not knowing the full scale of the situation back then was quite terrifying, now three months have gone by and plans to finally reopen the university by first week of May 2020 has been confirmed.

I, along with my sister, who is in 3rd year of the same school, took 'social-distancing' quite seriously. In Shanghai, public transports were operating but most of the shops, market, and places of public gatherings were closed. There was simply no need to go out and about, so we stayed put. The few times we did step out, wearing a surgical face mask, things seemed okay, temperatures were checked everywhere, even in the local vegetable market and the few department stores which were open for daily essentials. Precautions like not touching face and washing hands with soap after entering home, followed up by carefully managing clothes and shoes to prevent contamination, has been a tedious but important routine.

As signs of resuming my internship work dwindled, I felt I needed to be productive after almost a month of lazying around, so my daily routine now consists of studying, yoga, working out and reading.

The school arranged weekly case base learning (CBL) cases and other online classes for us. We stayed home, as per school's regulation to minimize travel and did not return to the dormitory during this period. The school has also been monitoring our whereabouts by making us fill health status forms every day since the beginning of the outbreak. These past months have taught me the fragility of life, the adverse impacts of our actions on the environment and the importance of having a healthy state of mind. As civilians, I believe that full-fledged cooperation is our responsibility and our most valuable contribution, to win this battle against the virus.

Jesifei- Three days after finishing my exams, on 22 January 2020, the students in my dorm were notified to attend a meeting regarding COVID-19. The meeting was organized by Shanghai Center for Disease Control and Prevention (SCDC) to make the students more aware of the disease.⁹ According to the guidelines provided, I wore a mask whenever I stepped out of my dorm, washed hands with soap or sanitized every time I arrived back. I made sure I ate well cooked food, and went out only when necessary.

As our winter vacation had already begun, on 23 January 2020, together with my sister (Jenifei), we moved to our family house in Shanghai for the Chinese New Year. Since the end of January, my university has placed strict entry-exit rules within the university compound; no outsiders are allowed to enter the school grounds, and the students need a pass every time they go in and out of their dorm buildings. Each student of my university has to report every morning, even as of now (26 April 2020), to their respective in-charge about their whereabouts and their health status. Any student living outside school premises is advised not to enter school grounds to avoid the chances of cross-infection. Thus, we have been staying with family till further notice from school. As of

now, the severity of the outbreak is very minimal in Shanghai.

We have been engaged in school activities via online classes since mid-February. The experience of other students in Shanghai reflects that restricted life has been okay because of the management and support provided by our teachers and school. Many foreign students who returned home during the outbreak are still stuck in their home countries due to lockdown.

Rewina- By the end of January, most students had already left for their homes, since the semester had ended; so the dorm was very quiet. My sister and I went out only for emergency situations; we mostly went out to stock up on food. But as the condition grew serious, we decided to buy vegetables and other necessities online instead, to minimize human contact. We were thinking of staying in China during the epidemic, but as the number of cases increased in Wuhan, my family got very concerned and hence we returned to our home country, Ethiopia, on 2 February 2020. We took the best possible precautions, such as wearing masks and sanitizing our hands as we headed for the airport. By the time we arrived Ethiopia, there were no cases recorded, but now (26 April 2020) there are 123 cases and three deaths so far in the capital Addis Ababa.

The government has yet not implemented strict lockdown measures in the capital. Now, I am living in Mekelle, 45 minutes from Addis Ababa, where lockdown measures have been implemented, unlike the capital. We are attending online classes and our school in Shanghai has taken good responsibility to make sure we have no problems with the classes. As for my family, we go out only when necessary.

Javaria- I returned back to Shanghai from travelling on 28 January 2020, and was kept in quarantine for two weeks in my dorm. My temperature was checked twice every single day to ensure that I hadn't caught the virus.

Since then I've been living in the dorms for the last three months and it's not quite as problematic as people would think. There are restrictive measures in place, but with the best interest of the students in mind. The school provides us with face masks for free; to ensure that when we go out we're taking all the necessary precautions. We must return back by 9 pm every night and sign in and out every time we enter or exit the dorm building, so the school can really make sure the students don't contract the virus. It hasn't been that hard, as I've been able to find things to occupy myself with.

I understand that I have access to better facilities than a lot of people, and since it's a pandemic, it's not going to be easy. So if the only thing I can do is stay inside, wear masks and stay clean, I consider it the most basic and easiest thing to do and not make it harder for the health officials in Shanghai.

Acknowledgement

We thank Dr. Jay N Shah (father of Jenifei and Jesifei) for encouragement and guidance during writing.

Conflict of Interest

None

Funding

None

Author contribution

Jenifei and Jesifei conceptualized the project, all authors wrote and approved the final draft.

Reference

1. Xinhua. China publishes timeline on COVID-19 information sharing, int'l cooperation. Xinhuanet [internet]. 2020 Apr 4. [cited 2020 Apr 17]. [Weblink](#)
2. Sohrabi C, Alsafi Z, O'Neill N, Khan M, Kerwan A, Al-Jabir A, et al. World Health Organization declares global emergency: A review of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19). *Int J Surg*. 2020 Apr;76:71-6. [DOI PubMed](#) [GoogleScholar](#) [Weblink](#)
3. Elwafaii O. Wuhan reopens after coronavirus lockdown. CGTN [Internet]. 2020 Apr 8. [cited 2020 Apr 20] [Weblink](#)
4. Worldometer. Coronavirus cases: statistics and charts. Worldometer [Internet]. [cited 2020 Apr 24] [Weblink](#)
5. Xinhua. Shanghai reports 1 imported COVID-19 case. Xinhuanet [internet] 2020 Apr 24. [cited 2020 Apr 24] [Weblink](#)
6. Xinhua. Chinese mainland reports two new imported COVID-19 cases. China.org.cn [Internet]. 2020 Apr 24. [cited 2020 Apr 24] [Weblink](#)
7. Ruijin Hospital-上海交通大学医学院 Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine [Internet]. 2018 May 15. [cited 2020 Apr 24]. [Weblink](#)
8. Wikipedia. Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine. Wikipedia [Internet]. 2020. [cited 2020 Apr 24]. [Weblink](#)
9. Shanghai city disease prevention and control information platform. Scdc.sh.cn [Internet]. [Weblink](#) [cited 2020 Apr 27]