

Title: COVID-19 Volunteering Experience In Vietnam

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Acknowledgment: None

Financing: NA

Conflict of interest statement by authors: The Authors have no conflict of interest to disclose

Compliance with ethical standards: This article does not contain any studies with human or animal subjects performed by any authors.

Authors Contribution Statement:

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		1	2	3	4	5	6
Conceptualization	Ideas; formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aims.	X	X	X			
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Writing – Review & Editing	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work by those from the original research group, specifically critical review, commentary or revision – including pre- or post-publication stages.	X	X	X			

Manuscript word count: 890

Number of Figures and Tables: 3

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Discussion Points:

1. It is crucial for medical students the act of controlling and repelling the pandemic.
2. Does medical volunteering provide medical students with a positive learning experience or not?
3. What do medical students need to prepare to contribute to the effective anti-epidemic act?

1 4. Difficulties that volunteers are facing while participating in an anti-epidemic campaign.

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1 THE EXPERIENCE.

2 Vietnam was assessed as having the pandemic under control nationwide after the first wave of coronavirus
3 disease 2019 (COVID-19). However, on 24/7/2020, the Ministry of Health announced the first community
4 infection case in Da Nang after 99 days with no new cases.¹ Since then the number of new cases has constantly
5 been increasing with dozens of cases per day. The most livable city in Vietnam suddenly became the epicentre
6 of the largest outbreak in the country. Living at the heart of the pandemic, I did not expect my life to be turned
7 upside down again because of this virus.² As a medical student, I wanted to contribute a small part of my own
8 strength to repel this pandemic, so as soon as I saw the announcement of recruiting volunteers to participate in
9 anti-epidemic action for the city,³ I immediately registered to join. Not only me but also many medical students
10 all over the world had spirit to defeat the pandemic whenever it came to their country.⁴

11 Our family did not know about our participation due to the epidemic's complicated situation, and thus we
12 intended to keep our participation concealed from them. This was a tough decision, however, a week later they
13 found out. Instead of banning me, the family were very supportive, although I know my mom worries about me
14 a lot. Everyone's support is like fuel to our enthusiasm to work against the pandemic. I was sometimes nervous,
15 of course, same as the medical students in Nigeria,⁵ but I tried to put the negative feelings aside and get the
16 task done as a medical student. Before joining, we were trained by the school and equipped with knowledge
17 about the SARS-CoV-2 virus such as taking swab samples, protecting ourselves, and tracing contacts. We were
18 also tested first – if the result was negative, we were ready to fight. (Figure 1)

19 More than 400 medical student volunteers from first to fifth year are divided into eight groups: seven districts in
20 the city and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). We were then assigned to the Medical Center, Medical
21 Station, to participate in activities locally. The senior students will return to the CDC to participate in data entry
22 and support at the laboratory. As junior students we joined the locally supporting teams. My group consisted of
23 seven members with the initial task of tracing suspicious infected cases. Our mission included temperature
24 measurement, monitoring the health of a residential area with confirmed cases, data entry, managing
25 information on the NCOVI online system, participating in and supporting nasal swab testing in the community,
26 etc. (Figure 2)

27 We had to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect ourselves and others. In the first COVID-19
28 wave of the pandemic, I really admired the health care staff who were wearing the blue protective suits. They
29 were so heroic and admirable, and now this was my turn. It turned out that wearing the PPE was not as great
30 as I thought, as they scorching and highly inconvenient. This is where I began to truly understand how much
31 commitment and determination the doctors and other health care staff need to treat patients wholeheartedly in
32 the front line.

33 Our day started at 5:30 am and usually ended at 5 pm, or even until 6 pm. On the first day, it was difficult for us
34 to catch up with the operational flow of the assigned jobs due to learning how to wear PPE and getting to know
35 members of the team. We worked every day, and each day our tasks were different. It only took two days for
36 us to get acquainted with everyone and work at the volunteer site, maybe because everyone was so friendly.

37 Regarding our team's tracking mission – when we found a new cases, we verified the exposure cases with F0,
38 followed by going to every house, knocking on the door and taking the history from each person. It sounded
39 simple, but with each case, the number of contacts was exceptionally high, so the number of hits could be
40 hundreds to thousands. So going from door-to-door and knocking from house-to-house, was quite tricky. Of
41 importance, a great application was born: – Bluezone. It helps track contacts and warn users if there is close

1 contact with F0.⁶ When two users of the app pass by within a distance of 2 meters, the app uses a low-energy
2 Bluetooth signal between devices overtime to estimate the proximity and record the contact history between the
3 users. After a user tests positive for COVID-19, the Ministry of Health will use the infected person's Bluezone
4 app ID code to track the infected person's schedule and notify those who have contacted them. Thanks to the
5 application, traceability has been much more manageable.

6 We are still volunteering locally; the number of new cases is increasing, but fewer than before. The pandemic
7 in the region is basically under control and we are hoping the outbreak will soon be extinguished so that life will
8 return to the same level as before. I miss life before COVID-19 so much! Good luck to over 100 volunteer
9 members of the school in Tien Son COVID hospital; however, we hope that there will be a limited number of
10 new COVID-19 cases and the field hospital being built will not be needed at all and the pandemic will be defeated
11 as soon as possible. (Figure 3)

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1 **FIGURES AND TABLES.**

2 **Figure 1.** Training for wearing personal protective equipment.

3



4

5 **Figure 2.** Volunteers are doing contact tracing (picture taken through a protective phone cover)



6

1 **Figure 3.** Always be optimistic because Vietnam will overcome the pandemic.



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