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Turned Away From Hospitals, My Father-In-Law's Death From COVID Shows Delhi Is A Mess

Hospitals clearly told us to not even come because they did not have beds.

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By Mandeep Singh



THE INDIA TODAY GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Health workers and doctors at New Delhi's LNJP Hospital during the nationwide lockdown in May.

On 26 May, my 67-year-old father-in-law developed a light fever. When the fever did not subside in the next two days and since he was a high-risk patient who was also asthmatic,





we consulted online from a reputed chain prescribed medicines for three days and suggested we get a [COVID-19](#) test done if the fever didn't subside.

When the fever, which had been mostly low, around 100°F, did not subside, we went to Ganga Ram Hospital on 31 May. An X-Ray revealed that my father-in-law had a chest infection. Samples were taken for a COVID test and the hospital authorities told us that the results will be available online. We were also told that in case the reports come out positive, the hospital would contact us themselves.

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READ: [Think You Have Covid-19? What To Do According to Delhi's Coronavirus Helpline](#)

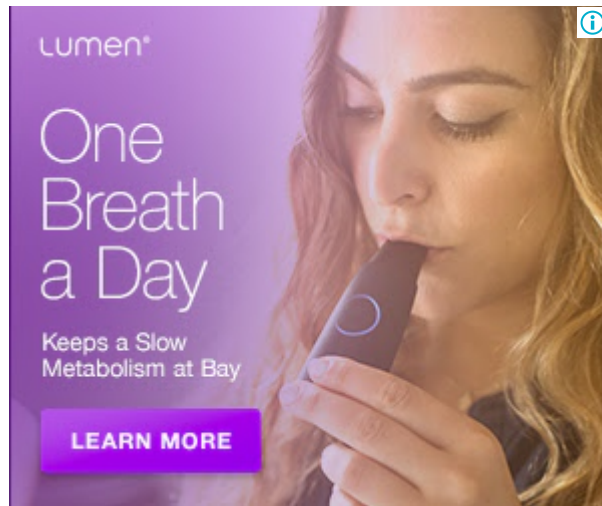
The day we went to get the tests done, it was raining heavily and since there was no proper, hygienic waiting area, the patient got completely drenched.

Then on 1 June, we downloaded the report which said that our father-in-law was COVID positive. That's when our ordeal began. Though they had promised, Ganga Ram Hospital did not contact us. When we tried calling them to figure what we should do next, no one answered those calls.

Frustrated, we started reaching out to the other hospitals we knew were admitting COVID patients. We called Max, Apollo, AIIMS, Safdurjung — all the hospitals directed us not to come as they did not have beds.

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With nowhere to go and no hospital willing to admit my father-in-law, we began calling doctors we knew — one of them was an acquaintance who is responsible for treating COVID patients in a hospital. That doctor, on knowing our plight, expressed surprise and informed us that Ganga Ram Hospital should have immediately referred our father-in-law to a hospital if it did not have beds, once they knew he was positive. That is how it should have worked, instead of us having to beg hospitals to take him in. Anyway, by consulting doctors treating COVID patients over phone, we began my father-in-law's medication. Ganga Ram, where we got the first set of tests done, had completely stopped responding to our calls.



THE SORRY STATE OF HELPLINES

Realising hospitals were not helping, we began calling the government helplines. We first called the Central government's COVID helpline. The person manning the helpline said

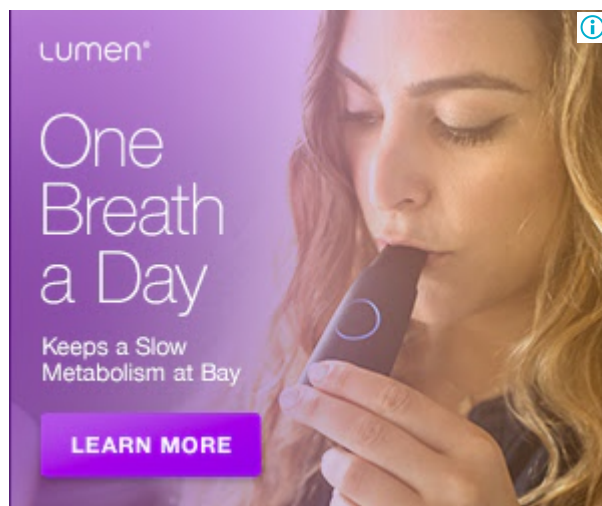




Nothing more he could do to help us. We called the Delhi government helpline and it continued to remain busy, whenever we called.

Then, with no help in sight, my wife turned to Twitter. She tweeted, desperately asking for help with her father getting admitted to a hospital. Several people responded, including a politician, but most of the advice we got is since my father-in-law's temperature was below 101°F, he need not get admitted to a hospital. We were not convinced, but we were helpless, since no place would anyway admit him.

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No hospital, despite the repeated tweets, however, responded.

With no one from the government, no one from quarantine facilities to advise us, the Aarogya Setu app not showing any possibility of exposure from nearby, we were completely at a loss.

On 3 June, his temperature began climbing. It had reached 102°F now, and we made another round of calls to hospitals and got the same response — “Don't come, we don't have beds, we will have to send you back.”

At 5am on Thursday, his temperature climbed to 102°F again, we gave him medicines suggested by doctors till now and his temperature came down to 98°F. We began calling hospitals again, but got the same answer. No beds, no beds, no beds.

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We called the Delhi COVID helpline again. This time, someone answered and said LNJP has 1,100 beds, so we should take him there.

“

No beds, no beds, no beds.

We made our father-in-law get into our car and drove to LNJP at 6:50 in the morning. When we reached the COVID block, the doctor enquired when and where he was tested. We gave him all the details, including that he is asthmatic. The doctor kept insisting since he had been tested at Ganga Ram, we should take him back there. My father-in-law, terribly sick already, was sitting there in the car, right in front of the hospital's emergency block.

When we walked back to the car, my father-in-law couldn't sit up anymore and fainted. We ran back to the doctors, begging them to take him in as he had fainted. They kept saying, "This patient is from Ganga Ram, you should take him there."

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One of us grabbed a stretcher lying nearby to at least lay him down properly, and one of them said, "Please don't take our stretcher, go to the hospital he was diagnosed in."

We begged a passerby to help and pulled my unconscious father-in-law out of the car and lay him down on the stretcher. And all the doctors kept saying was to take him to the other hospital. We ourselves forced our way in, wheeling the stretcher inside the emergency room. No one attended to him.

We ran to the first doctor we found and fell at his feet. With folded hands, we begged him to take a look at our patient. He said he would see him in 10 minutes, but he should have been taken to Ganga Ram Hospital. Ten minutes later, he came and checked on my father-in-law, saying he needed to be immediately put on oxygen. He was then put on oxygen. Fifteen minutes later, he was dead.

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men began a long wait, because the protocol apparently is, the ambulance doesn't take a dead body to the cremation ground till there are three or four of them. Looks like a quota needed to be filled for his body to be taken to the cremation grounds.

Finally, hours after we took an alive person out of his house in our car, we returned after cremating him.

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Mandeep Singh .

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