



יום שני ה' ניסן תש"פ  
Monday, March 30, 2020

Dear Friends,

The situation has united us in a way like few other events in history. As we witness what is occurring in places like New York and London, please know that our hearts are with you. From the media coverage and brief reports we get from colleagues there, we understand the devastating scope of the crisis and the toll it is taking on the medical teams and communities at large. It provides the very stark proof of the potential for similar developments in all parts of the world.

We wrote our first update about Shaare Zedek's Coronavirus response just two weeks ago, as the first wave of patients was being treated and we were heavily focused on preparations towards the projected steep increase of more serious cases.

Having been officially designated as one of Israel's leading hospitals assigned for comprehensive COVID-19 response (a designation given to only six Israeli hospitals,) on Motzei Shabbat, we ordered the opening of our third Keter (Corona) Unit for the treatment of COVID-19 patients. In addition, we now have a fully operational Corona ICU Unit with eleven bed stations for our most critical cases. The current number of COVID patients as of this writing is 55, which is almost ten percent of the nationally hospitalized patient total. We fully anticipate that the numbers will only continue to rise in the coming days. On Sunday, we sadly recorded two more Corona deaths at Shaare Zedek; a 92-year old man and an 84-year old woman.

As challenging as the situation remains here, and we are fully aware that it is even more desperate in other parts of the world, we believe there is room for cautious optimism. The models that we created in early March predicted that the number of serious cases would be higher than where they are today. We firmly believe that the fact that we are not at that point is due to Israel's early actions to close the borders and enforce social distancing that have been gradually- yet effectively- expanded over the course of this time-period.

Our daily concern however remains over whether this is enough. The data show that Jerusalem has the most COVID-19 cases in Israel and the curve is moving upwards in this community faster than in others. Compounding that concern is the fact that Jerusalem is home to a higher percentage of high-risk elderly residents as compared to the rest of the country.

The reality is that we cannot let down our guard for even a moment and that we continue to anticipate that a wave of seriously-ill patients will arrive in the days and weeks ahead. We specifically know that the onset of Pesach and the approaching Ramadan represent a grave threat for further escalation and social distancing will become far more challenging.

Beyond the tremendous medical response, we need to take a moment to reflect on the remarkable sense of unity that has been highlighted within Shaare Zedek over the past few weeks. Even as our doctors and nurses are the front lines, there are countless other departments and units that are working above and



beyond to respond to the crisis. From the cleaning crews who work around the clock under unprecedented pressures, to our catering teams that need to update their packaging and delivery methods, we are continuously astounded by the level of response to the emergency situation from all across the hospital.

We have always prided ourselves on the family ethos which defines Shaare Zedek and this becomes all the more clear in these deeply challenging times. So many of our staff members have been forced into isolation and many others are on vacation without pay, yet the spirit of dedication remains as strong as ever. Our team put together a short video clip that best displays this feeling of camaraderie and can be [viewed here](#).

We are also proud of one of our top nurses, Elisheva Weissrosen, a mother of nine, who was chosen as "Hero of the Day" by the national newspaper Israel Hayom for her dedication to the Keter Ward.



Similarly, we have received ongoing support- both practical and financial- from many of Israel and the world's leading corporate names. Over the past week alone, we have received gifts from companies like MobileEye, Bank Hapoalim, Microsoft Israel, Eldan Rental Cars, Coca Cola Israel, Unilever and McDonalds Israel. This is both a telling sign of the solidarity and sense of community which exists at these times and recognition of the critical role Shaare Zedek plays in this national effort.

As we have described in our previous updates, the needs remain extraordinary so your continued support is so critical. This situation has an impact on so many areas of the hospital that require that we respond.

While the public's attention has obviously shifted, cancer diagnoses continue, chemotherapy and dialysis treatments must go on and babies continue to be born – along with the countless other medical activities with which we're involved each and every day.



There is no exaggerating the unprecedented nature of the times we are living in. As seasoned healthcare managers, we are certainly well aware of the scope of the potential challenges both here in Israel and around the world. We take enormous pride in the Shaare Zedek staff and in that spirit of solidarity we feel from across our city, our country and from you, our friends all over the globe.

As we continue to confront this incredible challenge, please know that wherever we find ourselves on the globe we are truly in this together.

We hope that we will be able to update you next week that our worst concerns are not being realized. Yet we once again promise that whatever awaits us, Shaare Zedek- with your continued support- will do whatever possible to respond.

Sincerely yours,

Ofer Merin, MD  
Director General

Jonathan Halevy, MD  
President

