



ABOVE: Yamuna Mathew leans against a dentist chair in her office. She closed her practice due to the risks of COVID-19. "I can't wait until we can feel a sense of normalcy again," Yamuna said. (Photo courtesy of Yamuna Mathew)

RIGHT: Because of their living circumstances, the Osborns were featured on KMOV March 31. The Osborns were also featured on NPR, KSDK and Fox & Friends. "I don't live in the house with my family; I live in a camper in my driveway," Tiffany said. (Photo by Bradford Siwak)



SUPERHEROES IN SCRUBS

How COVID-19 is impacting medical professionals

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The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted employment around the world. Many nonessential businesses have shut down, causing over 6.6 million Americans to file for unemployment (as of April 2). Although they may face loss of income, they now can protect themselves and their loved ones. However, the majority of healthcare workers cannot stay home from work, and the dangers of COVID-19 have had drastic impacts on their lives.

Tiffany Osborn, a doctor who works in the emergency room and intensive care unit of Barnes-Jewish hospital, is no stranger to these effects. Due to her close proximity to potential COVID-19 patients, she lives in a camper located in her driveway, isolated from her family. Tiffany can still talk to her family over video chat, and they can be outside together. Senior Ashley and eighth grader David, Tiffany's children, help make sure she is comfortable living alone.

"I've been sewing — making curtains for my mom," Ashley said. "I will leave them outside for her so she can hang them in her trailer."

Living separately has been difficult for both Tiffany and her family. Ashley misses doing things with her mother, such as making dinner and drinking tea together at night. Tiffany misses being able to regularly interact with her family.

"I miss being able to hug my kids and give them a kiss goodbye when I go to work," Tiffany said. "I miss the ability to sit down together on the couch and watch TV. It's not as isolating as it could be since we can still talk, but it's not the same."

In addition to the Osborn family, the Mathew family is also being greatly affected by this pandemic. Yamuna Mathew, owner of Des Peres Family Dentistry and mother to junior Zubin and eighth grader Ashwin, has been forced to shut down her office.

"As a business owner, it has been really tough," Yamuna said. "We have closed the office doors, and despite no revenue coming in, we still have bills to pay as usual."

Yamuna is not the only medical worker in her household. Her husband, Stanley Mathew, is an endocrinologist at Barnes St. Peters and Progress West Hospitals. This pandemic has changed how he practices medicine.

"Currently, I continue to see patients at the hospital using precautions," Stanley said. "I have been doing virtual visits whenever possible by using phone and video links. This protects these patients from being exposed to COVID-19 and protects me and my staff to a degree — but is different from what I am used to doing."

Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has had severe impacts on medical professionals. Tiffany, Yamuna and Stanley have altered their lives in order to ensure the safety of themselves and others.

"If you're supposed to think about positives [in this situation], you think about what the rationale is," Tiffany said. "It is that you love other people more than yourself. And by doing the work that I'm doing, I'm helping to end this [pandemic] as soon as possible." ■