**Abbreviations**

**I:** Interviewer

**R**: Denotes Respondent.

I: So we can start.

**R: No problem.**

I: Alright, as I am saying we want to know about COVID, since they started admitting COVID patients early this year, how did this affect your job? Were you assigned to COVID wards?

**R: That’s true, I am in 3B, there’s a team here which conducts COVID tests, and I have also worked in a COVID ward and after that I went for a COVID test and the results came out negative, but I won’t stop here, since I will continue doing the same, since we still have positive COVID cases.**

I: The patient who tested positive to COVID, did they test positive whilst here in 3B ward?

**R: He tested positive at HDU.**

I: Oh, ok.

**R: He was in 5A for an operation, and then he went to Mwaiwathu where he was referred back to here, and we didn’t know that he was positive, I took him for CD scanning but he was sent back to here, I was the one handling him and he was sent for quarantine at Kameza.**

I: Yeah.

**R: I think now he is ok.**

I: Ok, he recovered.

**R: Exactly.**

I: Is he the only one who tested positive?

**R: No, there are quite a good number of patients who tested positive.**

I: And they are sent to COVID

**R: Quite good number tests positive and they are sent to 3A, and one has just died who has raised the figure to 184, he was in HDU.**

I: 3B HDU?

**R: No, there, after he tested COVID positive he went there and he died and if I am not wrong he was buried Friday morning, he brought the figure to 184.**

I: At the onset of COVID what measures did the hospital put in place to avoid the spread of COVID and to make sure the staff doesn’t contract the disease?

**R: Thank you, measures were put in place like to visitors were allowed to see patients and for us the health workers we were advised to wear mask all the time, we should frequently wash hands, and no hand shake, and this has helped in preventing the spread of the disease, and I just want to thank the health authorities.**

I: So putting the measures in place is one thing and following them is another thing, do you think the health care workers follow these measures or not?

**R: Some people have become careless, and sometimes we do advise each other on what to do and what not to do, but as health workers we need to lead by example and people we are taking care should see what we are doing, for example here the people I talk to follow what I tell them, sorry (??)**

I: Why do you think people become careless?

**R: You know people are born different, some people were born deaf and then some people don’t listen to what others are saying and don’t take things seriously, you have to listen to what others are saying, don’t pretend as if you are(??) not this you have to accept what somebody is saying.**

I: So some people don’t listen to others right?

**R: Sir,**

I: So some people don’t just listen?

**R: Yes.**

I: Ok, so you have mentioned measures that were put in place by the hospital to fight COVID, but you didn’t mention about trainings, did you attend any trainings that were organized by the hospital?

**R: Yes I attended trainings on COVID-19, though I was on holiday but I still came.**

I: Ok.

**R: Yes I attended and I follow what the experts told us, that if you are handling a patient you have to make sure to put on PPEs like masks, and if you are not put on a gown always make sure you put on gloves as this is a risky ward, and I do follow that, and I work to protect Malawians as I am also a Malawian and we should protect each other.**

I: That’s true. So how many trainings have you attended on COVID-19?

**R: Two COVID-19 trainings.**

I: Two trainings?

**R: Yes.**

I: How different were the trainings?

**R: The first one was on how to handle a COVID patient,**

I: ok,

**R: I attended that, the second training the PPE, personal protective, equipment issue was also tackled, and they explained to us thoroughly how to do it because at first we were doing it anyhow and I was told not to go into a ward without a mask, this is what you have to do. And if you are working you have to put on PPE, had it been that I was there I could have put on my PPE.**

I: How readily available is the PPE equipment here at the hospital?

**R: Yes the PPE is available, it was donated by Welcome Trust and it is readily available, if the PPE is not available we call them and they look for it and bring it. But the 3B PPE it was donated by Chila fund.**

I: Oh, ok.

**R: Exactly Chila fund, and the name of Chila is inserted on the PPE.**

I: Ok. So what’s included in the PPE?

**R: Gowns.**

I: Gowns?

**R: It doesn’t contain gloves, the gloves are from the government.**

I: Ok.

**R: The gowns,**

I: Yeah.

**R: There are no gloves.**

I: Ok.

**R: the gloves are government ones, but the challenge that is there is as health workers we need gumboots to protect ourselves but we don’t have.**

I: So that’s the PPE that is lacking?

**R: Exactly, goggles, face shields we don’t have.**

I: And yet you are handling COVID patients?

**R: Exactly.**

I: Ok, alright. Do you know if there’s a committee which was formed to manage COVID?

**R: I just heard about the committee but I don’t follow it and the Chairperson is Dr. Mponda**

I: Yeah.

**R: But I didn’t follow it.**

I: You didn’t follow who was in the committee. Ok, alright. During this period of COVID-19 some staff were sent to ENT and 3B, I don’t know if there were enough staff in your cadre?

**R: No, it wasn’t enough.**

I: No enough.

**R: (??) but the challenge is health workers are not enough, but we do our best and our job needs dedication, and if one is absent the other works on his behalf, our job needs dedication, we are not here for money, like in my case I am not here for money as they say the one to work in the hospital has to be a dedicated person.**

I: Yeah.

**R: so when I started working here I, said I need to be a dedicated person, we get shouted at sometimes.**

I: Ok, what can you say the hospital did well in fighting COVID-19, and what area would you like to see the hospital improving?

**R: The hospital through its director managed to take care of some things, but there is a short fall on working equipment and this is a big challenge but our director has promised to take care of things. At first they organized transport for staff but this is no longer happening so we are pleading to the director to organize transportation for us so that one should not attend to a patient whilst tired.**

I: Alright. If Malawi had higher number of cases like thousands and thousands of cases on a daily basis as it happened in other countries, what do you think could have happened in our hospitals?

**R: This could have been a big challenge but we need to be thankful to God as this disease didn’t kill more people as it happened in Europe, Italy, South Africa we need to thank God for protecting us as this could have been a big challenge.**

I: But let’s say we had high numbers in Malawi how could the hospital handle the situation to make sure everyone is getting help?

**R: If we had higher numbers like in other countries as I mentioned it could have been a big challenge because of shortage of staff, as I have already said we haven’t been hit hard as we have lower number of cases.**

I: How do you think the hospital should handle the situation if we happen to have high number of cases in future to ably help people?

**R: If we can have high number of cases,**

I: Yes.

**R: A health worker is a pioneer he has to work day and night, if we face challenges we dedicate ourselves assist each and every patient without looking at social status or mental status, I was told not to pretend but treat every patient the same.**

I: Ok, when the hospital started receiving COVID patients it started doing reverse triage so as to create space in the hospital do you think that was helpful or not?

**R: That’s for management, I can’t answer this is what I can say is, every sane person could know that in this room there is a patient and to help him, as for us we were there just to help the patients, but I can’t answer on behalf of management.**

I: Alright, during this time did you get a COVID-19 test?

**R: Yes, I was tested.**

I: What was your experience with nasal prongs?

**R: I got tested after assisting a patient who was in HDU,**

I: Yeah.

**R: he tested positive and I also went for a test but I didn’t complain of anything,**

I: Ok.

**R: because you get tested to be assisted if found positive, as I said I had typhoid and I was suffering on and off and at that time someone came can you come we doing a research for this, they tested and found that I was salmonella positive they gave me Cipro which was sensitive and gentamycin,**

I: Ok.

**R: the rest of medication (??) after taking that medication for five days I got better, up to now I am ok.**

I: Ok.

**R: through the research (??) forward.**

I: Yeah.

**R: according to what I was suffering and I am thankful. And I volunteer myself to participate in every research that is being carried out.**

I: Ok, my last questions, as a health worker what was your worry when helping COVID-19 patients?

**R: I didn’t have any fear, I will give an example of a soldier in a battle field he doesn’t surrender he still fight, I don’t have any fear, and I took an oath in my whole life since I left school and started working here I said I am here to help people whether someone has soiled himself I do help, I want to thank God for looking after me**

I: Ok. Were you not discriminated by your family and relatives since you work in the hospital?

**R: No, no one discriminated me (??)**

I: Is there anything you would like to know about COVID-19 disease?

**R: We just hear the disease originated from Wuhan city in China and it spread to here, but we are able to prevent it.**

I: My last question. If management asked you what they need to change so that in future they should be able to manage pandemics or high number of COVID cases properly, what can be your priority area?

**R: All I can advise management is about PPE, we are the ones who face challenges as they just work in their offices, PPE is an important issue, when we tell them they just write it down, things like goggles, gumboots, face shield and other things just to mention a few. There are no uniforms, there is no pandemic equipment, some of the equipment we are using now is the equipment when there’s was Ebola outbreak in DRC,**

I: Yeah.

**R: so the management should make sure that the health care workers are protected.**

I: Alright, these are the questions that I had, I don’t know if you have anything to add.

**R: What I can say is, you as researchers please tell our management that they should put things in place so that we should be able to work with no doubt and that we should not give up, since if we give up we will kill an innocent patient,**

I: Yeah, yeah.

**R: let us work as dedicated people, we are pioneers, work as very dedicated people, nurses, doctors and even you being one of the doctors, let us do things that will be of help, for example a football team has eleven players with a goal keeper, and if we work as a team we want to score a goal and if we score we win, and if someone dies here it really hurts as we know we have worked in vain, thank you.**

I: Alright, thank you for your time.

**R: Thank you.**

I: As I said our aim is for the hospital management and the ministry to know which areas need to improve in managing covid in our central hospitals, through the experience of health care workers they had during covid time.