

## GUEST EDITORIAL

### COVID-19 PANDEMIC - PERSONAL ENCOUNTER



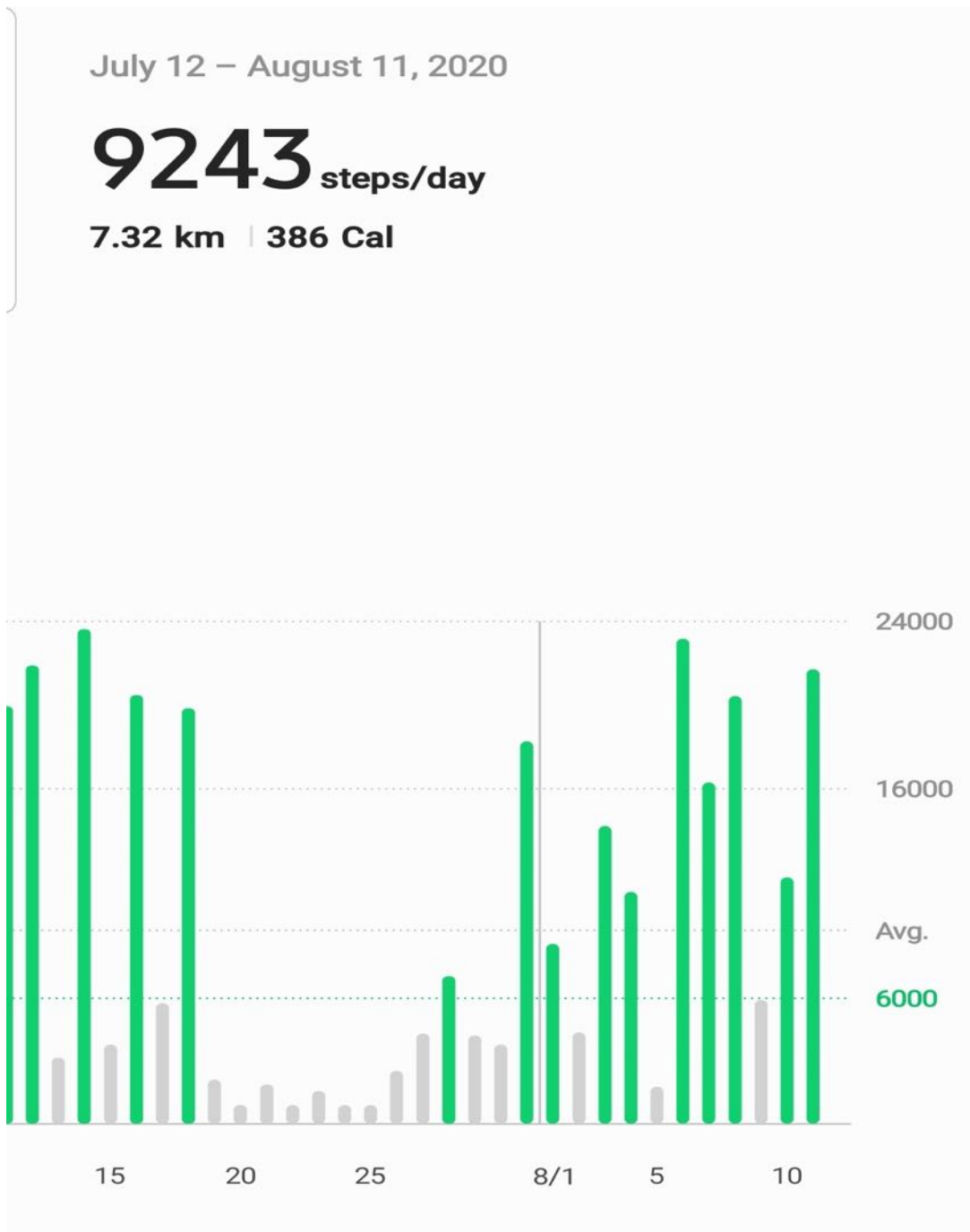
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## Covid-19 pandemic- Personal encounter

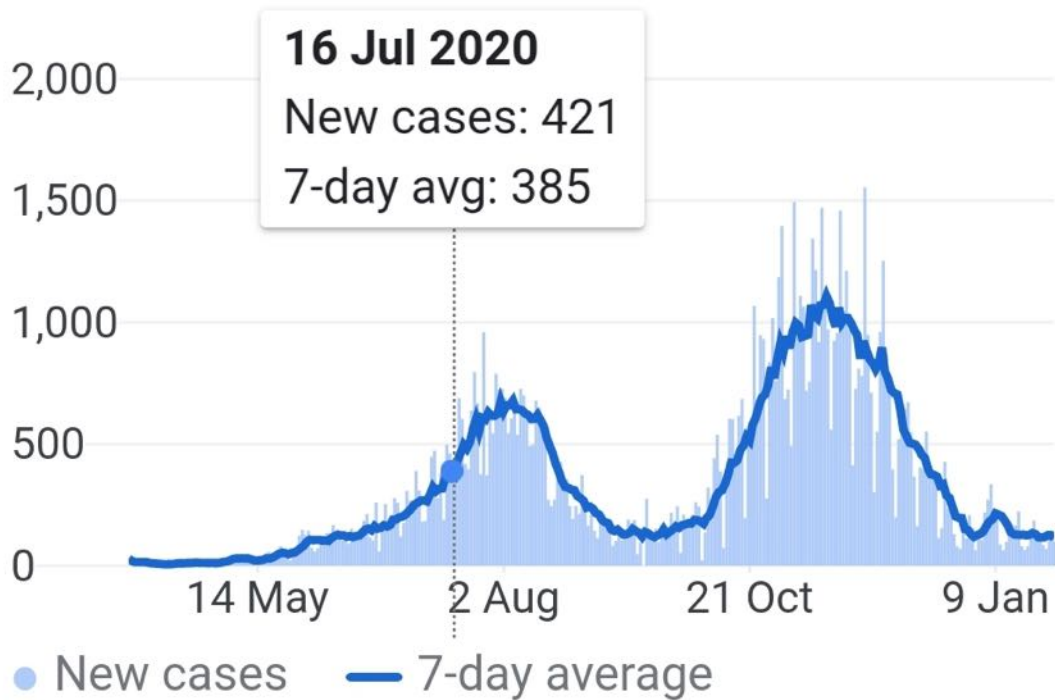
Covid-19 pandemic has been with us since beginning of the year 2020. Covid is selective and ruthless to people with other underlying diseases or conditions which would weaken the body immune system one of which is advanced age. I always consider myself healthy as I do not have any known underlying conditions and I am fairly active. At 66 years of age, I consider myself lucky as I have never had a life threatening ailment since 5 years old. However, this was bound to change radically during this ongoing corona pandemic. It was the morning 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020 when I woke up feeling unwell and I attributed it to a small boil on my stomach which I had drained overnight. I thought it might be malaria and at worst septicemia infection. I feared septicemia more than malaria as over the years I have had several episodes of malaria without any serious outcome. I visited a family chemist in the morning who sent me for laboratory tests which included malaria, blood sugar, complete hemogram and urinalysis (covid-19 test is not yet available in many medical labs). Apart from the hyper-sensitive skin and pain all over the body, I did not have any other obvious signs of sickness. The lab analysis were out by late afternoon same day showing normal blood and urine results. However, revisiting my movements that day, I can recall complaining of lunch meal being too salty. The chemist called me to pick the drugs which I thought were for the suspected septicemia. The drugs were a one week dose of azithromycin 500mg, dexamethasone 0.5mg, hydroxychloroquine tablets and Vit C 1000mg. I never suspected Covid-19 infection since I had followed all the laid down protective protocols. The chemist did not mention to me about covid-19 infection at that time. The following day I felt worse, that is, the whole skin felt painful to touch and chills. I sent out for malaria tablets (Artemisinin tablets) which I took together with the other drugs one per day for three consecutive days. By the fourth day, I could not tolerate cold food or water and nothing tasted normal. With the loss of taste I also lost appetite for all foods. I started feeling very weak, having short breath and had a sore throat which was causing dry coughs whenever I tried to do any physical activity. This is the time it dawned on me that I must have contracted Covid-19. The chemist confirmed my fears and asked me to buy Foralin inhaler 400 and Asprin tablets to take once per day. Whereas I was not feeling pain, I was very weak and had the tendency to sleep. Sleep tendency brings about calmness which can only be described as silent hypoxia or “happy” hypoxia since the effect of low oxygen levels in the blood is not felt while resting. My movements within the house were calculated and short occasioned with belabored breathing and painful dry cough. I had never ever before felt being that weak, helpless and vulnerable. I feared going to sleep since I felt that waking up was not guaranteed. My highest body temperature rose to 38.4°C one day and I managed to lower it to 37.5°C using hot water towel. I had a lot of time to read articles about the Covid-19 symptoms and possible treatment protocols. WHO had not given out any covid-19 treatment protocol except the use of oxygen for the inpatients. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day I woke up feeling weak as usual and started to brush my teeth in front of a mirror when I saw a part my tongue looked bluish. I was scared since I realized that my oxygen level was very low. I immediately started a simple walking exercise within the bedroom for about 20 min. The exercise was tiresome and I coughed throughout the workout. After 20 min I checked my tongue again and it was normal-pinkish. I received the second dose of the medicine and I added Vicks VapoRub, a topical ointment.

Inhaling the steam of the topical ointment in hot water for a few minutes (5 min) at a time made me feel relieved and gave me hope for survival. By the 9<sup>th</sup> day, I started feeling better since I could walk outside the house and back without serious coughs. The recovery to normalcy from Covid-19 is made worse by time it takes for the taste and appetite to normalize thereby preventing the victim from getting the necessary nutrients for quicker recovery. I could eat little food that normally has no flavor such as avocados and boiled cassava. My throat was painful and felt swollen which made my voice hoarse and difficult to eat well. The recovery was as dramatic as the onset of the disease. By 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020, I had stopped coughing and breathing had almost regularized. Taste buds were stabilizing albeit slowly which made me eat healthier meals. I could walk up and down stairs with ease. I stayed indoors for the next 10 days before I ventured out. Within the period I was sick, I lost 7 kg in body weight and I am lucky since no vital organs were affected. All viruses is capable of fast mutations, we should expect variants some of which might be more virulent. It is my hope that the current global vaccine drive will end the pandemic and life can revert back to normal.



**X- axis shows the days of the month while the Y- axis indicates the number of steps/day**

My Samsung health mobile phone activity data from 12<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2020. The diagram shows how inactive I was during the time I was sick compared to my daily routine.



Each day shows new cases reported since the previous day

<http://www.nutritionhealth.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/covid19/Nutrition%20Clinical%20Management%20for%20COVID-19.pdf>

As per the diagram above, it shows that I got infected at the beginning of the first wave of the pandemic in Kenya.