Isolation not that bad, infected S’porean says of hospital stay

Toh Wen Li

When Mr Raymond Sim tested positive for Covid-19 last weekend, the first thing that went through his mind was not fear, but guilt.

The 53-year-old pastor at Light-house Evangelism church in Tampines, who developed a fever after a holiday in France, has spent the past few days warded at the National University Hospital.

“I was emotionally down. I tried to hide it – the feelings of guilt when my house was put on stay-home notice. How did I pass this danger to my family, when I am supposed to protect them?” said Mr Sim, who did not return to work after his trip.

“Because of this infection, the services in my church have been suspended. Self-condemnation and regret started to creep into my heart... But a lot of the assurance came from my colleagues, family and friends, and I managed to break out of it.”

After a groggy, feverish week in bed – with doses of paracetamol, cough syrup and a new drug being tried on him – Mr Sim’s fever has subsided, leaving a headache.

The Singaporean, who was in France from March 7 to last Thursday, spoke to The Straits Times in a Skype interview yesterday.

He is one of more than 300 people in Singapore who have been infected with the virus. The country has been seeing generally more daily reported cases, most of whom are residents and long-term pass holders returning from other countries.

Mr Sim’s isolation room has a bed, television, desk and bathroom. To pass the time, he reads, listens to music, and keeps in touch with his friends and family on social media.

Even though he is isolated, he does not feel alone – gift hampers and a balloon brighten up his room.

He said that every five to six hours, nurses enter the room to check his pulse, blood pressure and temperature. His blood is also tested, and in the mornings, he undergoes a swab test.

He finds the hospital food – patients can choose between Chinese, Western and Muslim menus – quite bland, but added that he has not had much of an appetite anyway.

When Mr Sim was overseas, he showed no obvious symptoms – besides an itchy throat near the end of the trip which he thought was due to sensitivity to the cold air.

Not long after he returned, however, he had a fever and headed to the National University Hospital. He tested positive for Covid-19, and was the country’s Case 227.

Mr Sim wants to encourage people to step forward if they suspect they have the virus. “Being in isolation is not that bad. I want to tell everyone who is afraid of reporting themselves: It is okay to come in.”

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