

Covid patients find friends in books!

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In mid May, the second wave of coronavirus was at its peak, and covid care centres were flooded with patients. While doctors and health workers were busy taking care of patients, the local administration was putting its best efforts to increase the existing infrastructures. There was a gloomy environment across the country, and only sad news was being circulated on social media. Patients were in dire need of positive energy to fight the viruses at these centres.



Let's Read Foundation, a Navi Mumbai-based NGO that promotes reading habits among all groups of people, came up with an innovative idea to set up a library at covid care centre for patients. The idea was completely new, and the municipal commissioner of Navi Mumbai Abhijit Bangar agreed to set up a library at the CIDCO Exhibition Centre in Vashi. Without any delay, the Let's Read Foundation and NMMC set up a library. Within a week, the library became popular among patients. Handpicked by IIT and IIM alumni, an excellent collection of Marathi, Hindi, and English books attracted patients, and they started spending time with books. Instead of spending time on mobile phones and social media, they started reading books of their choice. Despite the number of covid patients dropping to 140 at the centre, the library is still functioning and popular among patients.

Prafulla Wankhede, Founder and Trustee of Let's Read Foundation, said, "Covid patients have a lot of time at the covid care centre while getting treatment away from home. They may lose morale by thinking more about the disease as they are alone away from their families. Books provided them on various topics worked, and many of them stopped thinking about the pandemic."

Let's Read Foundation, which began about three years ago, received lots of feedback from patients, especially about the collection of books and the idea. One of the patients, Priyanka Pawar, shared her views on a Marathi book *Napas Mulanchi Gosht* that talked about great people like Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak Gulzar, and others who failed in their first attempts. But they kept trying and achieved success in their subsequent attempts. Pawar found inspiration in her covid fight.

After reading *Wings of Fire* by APJ Abdul Kalam, Vijay S Umate said that the book has changed his thought process and thanked the effort of Let's Read Foundation and NMMC for providing the book.