Top marathoner Mok Ying Ren says while he cannot outrun the virus, he hopes in God

For one week, I will be rostered to see suspected and confirmed patients of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) with concomitant orthopaedic conditions.

As I went home last week with the news that I had been rostered for this duty, I pondered its significance. I have a two-month-old baby at home, yet I have been tasked to work in a high-risk environment.

Admittedly, the risk that I will be taking is nowhere as high as my colleagues at the National Centre for Infectious Diseases or those down in the emergency department, and my exposure to the virus is minuscule

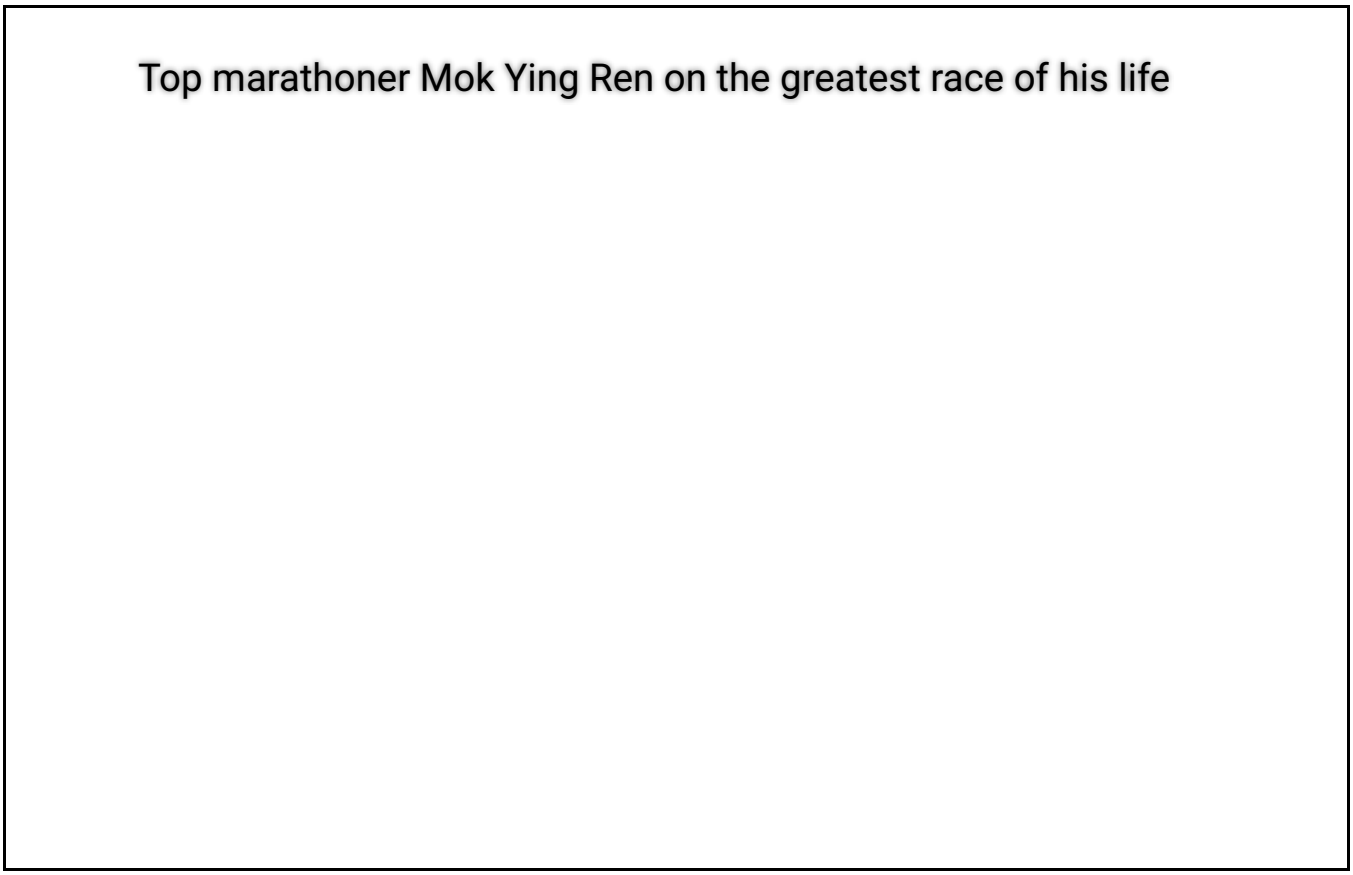
compared to the healthcare workers in Wuhan.

Nevertheless, there is still a risk. I think anyone in my position would feel a sense of fear, so my mind scrambled for reasons why I shouldn't fear.

1. GREAT FITNESS

For example, I tried to console myself with the knowledge of my fitness.

This has definitely come through my mind: "I was once the top marathoner in Singapore, my lungs must be so good! How bad can it be for me?"



But this sense of immunity was quickly shot down by medical experts in the news.

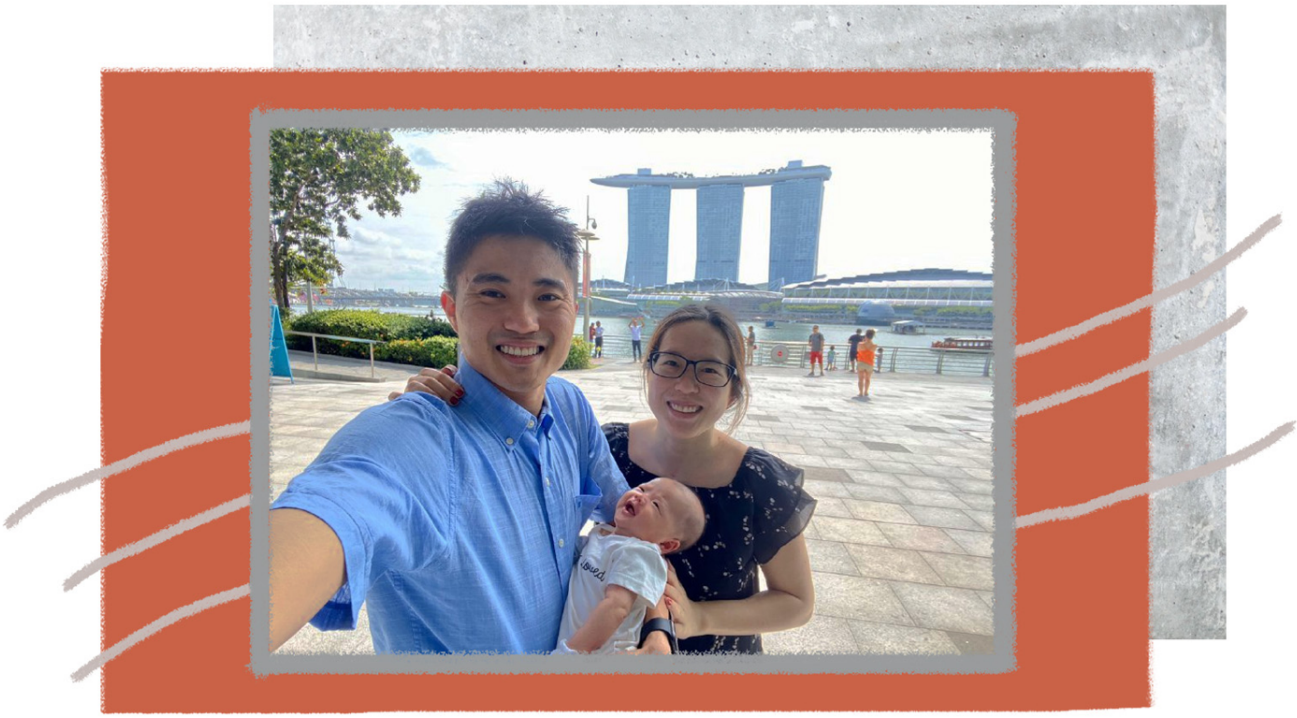
"It can take a young, healthy person and make them sick," said Dr William Schaffner, an infectious disease expert at Vanderbilt University Medical Center interviewed by *The New York Times*.

"That's clear from the healthcare workers and the young people in this paper."

2. SURVIVAL DATA

I also found myself seeking solace in statistics that favoured my survival: "0.2% mortality out of China? 0% in Singapore so far? Aiyah, won't be me one lah."

But thoughts of the possibility of me bringing the bug home to Emma banished this in-denial thought.



3. EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT

I also took comfort in the systematic way our government is managing the situation and how they are willing to foot the bills of the affected; and I was impressed with how they carried out contact tracing. These truly gave me much confidence.

However, my realisation that we are all human and fallible made me think twice. The reality is that anyone – including myself – could easily make silly mistakes that may unknowingly put everyone at risk.

Furthermore, the nature of this virus is so unpredictable with people staying asymptomatic for weeks. After much soul searching and reading up about COVID-19, the inevitable conclusion I come to is that much is still unknown about the virus (even *The New York Times* said the same!)

Dr Schaffner was again quoted at the end of another article saying, "In God we trust" – I couldn't agree more with him!

> *My rational mind, by elimination, has led me to realise that only God can provide me hope as an anchor for the soul.*

So how then will I approach my duty with God in the picture? I will plan to take necessary precautions.

The Bible makes it clear that we are to prepare and plan ahead. Proverbs 13:16 tells us a wise man thinks ahead – a fool doesn't. And in Luke 14, Jesus asks if anyone would build a tower without counting the costs?

So one of my precautions will be to use hospital gowns when seeing suspect patients, from which I can change, shower and return home in my own clothes.

I will also wear all necessary protection such as N95 masks and gowns to avoid contamination. These are my plans to keep my risks low, though not at zero.

And I will remember God's promises.

God promises good and hope for believers! I can be very sure, as Scripture promises in Romans 8:28, that "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him".

Sometimes we may be mistaken by what this verse promises as "good". The meaning of "good" here is akin to parents allowing their children to go through difficulty for "their own good" (growth).

The Bible does not promise me that I will not get the virus – John 16:33 makes this clear: "in this world you will have trouble". But I can rejoice because I'm confident that God sees me through every storm and every calm.

As I go through this week, I can be assured that God is sovereign. Even the apparent casting of lots – perhaps that's how I got chosen for the orthopaedics contamination team in the first place – is entirely in God's

control (Proverbs 16:33).

I can be sure that because God is sovereign and in control, the above promises will come to pass, just like how they did for Israel (Joshua 21:45).

If He is for me, who can be against me? So what do I fear for? I can cast my anxiety on Him and trust Him!

Indeed my rational mind, by elimination, has led me to realise that only God can provide me hope as an anchor for the soul – firm and secure (Hebrews 6:19) – through my faith and belief in Him (John 3:16).

Will you also turn to God for your steadfast hope? Let's also keep the patients, healthcare workers and our nation in prayer.

THINK + TALK

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