# Press Release | 27 March 2023

**QEH nurse that survived COVID-19 wins Unsung Hero Award at national awards ceremony**

**A person in a red dress holding a trophy

AI-generated content may be incorrect. Jenifer Saravanan, Collaborative Patient Participation Lead at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital King’s Lynn (QEH), has won the Unsung Hero Award at the 2024 British Indian Nurses Association (BINA) Awards.**

A group of people posing for a photo with a name sign

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Jenifer began her nursing journey in India, where she trained and worked in Goa, before making the life-changing decision to move to the UK in 2016.

Having experienced both sides of healthcare – as a caregiver and as a patient during the pandemic– Jenifer has gained an even greater appreciation for the vital role that nurses, and allied health professionals, play in shaping lives and offering hope.

Living in King’s Lynn with her husband and six-year-old daughter, Jenifer’s journey has been marked by resilience and personal experiences. During the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, she was working as a Staff Nurse at The QEH’s Denver Ward looking after patients when she contracted COVID-19. What followed was a rapid and terrifying decline in her health.

Jenifer was admitted to hospital, where her condition worsened quickly. She was transferred to the Critical Care Unit (CCU), put on a ventilator, and placed in an induced coma. She became critically ill and was transferred to Papworth Hospital, where she woke up 28 days later – on her birthday. The experience of being a patient herself and on the receiving care has deeply influenced Jenifer’s understanding of what it means to be a nurse, inspiring a more profound empathy and commitment to her role.

Jenifer said: “Both as a caregiver and a patient, I’ve learnt that the true essence of nursing lies in the empathy, resilience, and love we offer to those in need. This award is a reminder that the impact we have goes far beyond the care we give – it’s about the lives we touch and the hope we inspire. I am deeply honoured, but this is for every nurse who carries the light of compassion into the darkest moments. To be recognised for my contributions in front of so many inspiring colleagues was truly an unforgettable moment.”

As a lead in collaborative patient participation, Jenifer has been at the forefront of empowering patients and advocating for patient-centred care. Her tireless efforts ensure that patients' voices are heard, their needs are prioritised, and their experiences improve. She is known for her exceptional ability to foster communication and collaboration between staff and patients, always working to improve the patient journey.

“I am truly humbled and honoured to receive this award,” Jenifer said. “This recognition is not just mine but a reflection of the incredible teamwork and support I receive at The QEH. My passion lies in improving the patient journey and ensuring that their voices are an integral part of the care process.”

Pippa Street, Chief Nurse at The QEH said: “Jenifer’s well-deserved recognition at the BINA Awards is a testament to her dedication, compassion, and the lasting impact she has made on improving patient care and experience at The QEH. She embodies the very best of what nursing represents – caring for others with love, empathy, and resilience.

In addition to Jenifer’s award, Meghasri Hirst, Preceptor Midwife at The QEH, was shortlisted as a finalist for the Student Nurse of the Year award at the BINA Awards. Meghasri’s commitment to learning, patient care, and advancing the profession is truly inspiring.

Pippa Street said: “We are also incredibly proud of Meghasri for making it to the finals of the Student Nurse of the Year award. Her drive, compassion, and professionalism represent the very best of what we strive for in healthcare.”

Jenifer and Meghasri’s accolades underscore the exceptional work being done at The QEH and the hospital’s commitment to fostering an environment where healthcare professionals can thrive while making a difference in the lives of patients. Their recognition at the BINA Awards also highlights the growing influence of healthcare professionals from Indian heritage, who are shaping the future of healthcare in the UK.

**Ends. Notes to editors;** For media enquiries only, please contact Communications Team, [media.enquiries@qehkl.nhs.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@qehkl.nhs.uk) or 01553 613216. For all other enquiries, please contact QEH Switchboard on 01553 613613.