

# COVID<sup>IN THE</sup> HOUSE OF OLD



## **Week nine starts with some sad news.**

Two elderly Korean women on the 3rd floor die. Neither death is COVID-19 related. Staff delivering breakfast to Gum Yeo one morning assume she is still resting. Her nurse thinks otherwise and confirms she has died in her sleep.

A few weeks earlier an irate male resident threw her doll down the hallway and shoved her wheelchair towards where I was cleaning. I stopped her chair with my foot, shocked at his outburst. Her face was distraught. For the remaining weeks of her life she was often placed near the nursing station, away from other residents, holding her doll and snoozing peacefully. Hyo Ja lived at CWT for 16 years and was one of its first Korean residents. As she declines, family members are allowed to spend a last night with her. Funeral homes are not permitted in the building due to COVID-19.

When I encounter Irina, a Recreation Worker, she tells me she is dismayed that no chimes rang to announce the departure of their bodies. The depth of her grief surprises me. Then she shares that this coming Sunday is the anniversary of her husband's untimely death. Staff and residents normally gather to pay their respects when bodies leave the building. But by Wednesday we are officially in an outbreak so it is not allowed.

**STAFF MEMBER, CW TOWERS, TORONTO, Spring 2020 – Pandemic Diaries 3**

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