

Medical research is a collaborative effort

“Let India become alive by self-purification, that is self-restraint and self-denial, and she will be a boon to herself and mankind.”

In Mahatma, by D G Tendulkar, Vol 2, 2nd Edn. (1960), Publications Division, P. 56.

Dear Editor,

Raina and Kumar mention about two vaccines as India's contribution to (fight against) the global Covid-19 pandemic in the July 2021 issue of the Journal. They identify mankind's struggle against the novel virus as one which can be fought only when all of us stand in solidarity as a single unit—choosing the mutated virus as our common enemy. And we as a nation are making the best possible effort by rubbing shoulders with our fellows to put a brave front by researching technological fixes.^[1]

Whereas sincerity in thoughts is a laudable objective, we also need to realize some ground reality. Vaccine research and development in the modern era is a global joint venture—involving several players, many a times transcending national and international boundaries. Moreover, the barriers which need to be crossed to search for a solution are limited not to space alone but also time—when we realize that a virus-vector technology to carry code for spike protein of SARS-CoV-2 is something on which scientists have been working for several years—building upon others' work. Sarah Gilbert, Professor of Vaccinology at Jenner Institute and Nuffield Department of Clinical Medicine at Oxford University, made a seminal contribution with her colleagues in developing the vaccine by perfecting the art and science of mRNA technology through her sheer hard work along with AstraZeneca drug company.^[2]

On July 24, 2021 issue, Lancet published an editorial under the category of The Art of Medicine. This time the Journal makes us learn how swiftly we forget the untiring work of women researchers and while realizing the potential of the virus-vector vaccines in controlling the pandemic; we should give due respect to those scientists who burned the midnight oil to make all of us safe even before scale and scope of the upcoming mayhem just started to unfold in early 2020.^[3]

What we also need to learn is that public sector funding should be provided to private ventures before the R and D phase is initiated and even before the cost intensive manufacturing process is set into motion.^[4] Had there been a better vision to anticipate the extent of disruptions created by the novel coronavirus, resulting in more *upstream* funding, perhaps more companies would have invested stakes in the arena and more options would have been available to science today.^[5]

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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