

COVID-19 should not be taken lightly — Mitigation at the end of the lockdown

Dear Editor,

We have recently come across a few videos and posts, popping-up on our social network feeds just after an un-lockdown process initiated in India with an attempt to convince common people that:

1. SARS COV-2 is basically like the common flu.
2. Most people are dying due to comorbidities only.
3. Tests have lots of false positives and false negatives and cannot be trusted.
4. SARS COV-2 pandemic is fear propaganda by other countries, by picturizing different countries as villains, who are trying to destroy the Indian economy. So we should not care at all.

After going through the editorial published in April 2020 issue,^[1] I felt tempted to deal with the above issues as these are part of the novel misinformation propagation to make citizens take this pandemic lightly.

“SARS COV-2 is basically like the common flu”

No. COVID-19 virus affects almost all human organ-systems and causes serious deterioration of immune mechanism with loss of resistance to secondary infections. In the downstream effects of morbidities in different permutations and combinations, more numbers of younger folks are reported dying in different countries compared to common flu.

“Most people are dying due to comorbidities only”

Comorbidities usually are the common causes of death in most viral infections. From common seasonal flu to serious infections like HIV, many more persons die of comorbidities than the direct viral load-related effects. Global data depicting a range of 2%–10% deaths among all the diagnosed SARS COV-2 confirm individuals, which is a constant nightmare for all the levels of the health care providers.^[2,3]

“Tests have lots of false positives and false negatives and so cannot be trusted”

False positive and false negatives are an integral part of all the diagnostic tests, historically applied for all other illnesses and their investigations. Some very commonly used tests in modern

medicine have even worse false positivity and false negativity.^[4] SARS COV-2, whose natural history of the disease is still under research, has undeniably more issues in the diagnostic algorithms. We have to use what we have, for a hazardous disease causing a rapid pandemic, if we have anything at hand at all, that counts.

“SARS COV-2 pandemic is fear propaganda by other countries, etc.”

If it would be “fear propaganda”, then why other developed and developing nations reported unprecedented high fatality with their economy facing recession through long lockdowns and thereafter.^[3] In that case, citing the historical pandemics like “Spanish flu” and “black death” should have also been classified as “fear propaganda”.

In India, the lockdown was forced to be ended due to its effect on the economy. So, now people are forced to get out of home for their livelihoods and other activities with fear in mind.

Still, people will tend to be scared and thus:

- a) Avoid malls, restaurants, clubs, movies, gyms, mass transports, domestic and international travel destinations unless they feel absolutely necessary.
- b) Buy less fancy clothes, jewelry, and shoes as they will go out to attend fewer parties and gatherings.
- c) Attend less live events, celebrations, and parties, so much fewer event organizers, venues, and caterers will be booked

All these are bad for high business turnover and revenue generation models. So, now all these misinformation are spread to remove the fear in people’s minds, to generate more exchequers at the cost of lives of millions of commoners. As a sincere health care provider, it is my motto of life to spread correct information as I think for the good of my countrymen in the long run.

So, we need to be even more scared, and to be extremely cautious in the “unlock” (down) period, we “have to” get out from safe confines of home now, by consistently

- a) Wearing masks/face shields,
- b) Using hand sanitizers and washing hands frequently,
- c) Practicing physical distancing,
- d) Avoiding places/gatherings, which are not absolutely necessary,
- e) Stay home and encourage others around us to do the same, whenever possible, especially for the extremes of ages at high risk.

There is a saying in intellectual parlance — “If you cannot convince, try to confuse them.”

Do not fall in these traps of the vicious cycle of misinformation.

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