

Essential role of communication to alleviate the COVID-19 Pandemic fear

Dear Editor,

In your earlier issue, the editorial “Importance of effective communication during COVID19 infodemic” (2020;9:3793-6) very well summarized the framework for effective communication during pandemic.^[1] Diligent communication at all levels is the need of hour. Present pandemic is not only affecting the individuals physically but it is having a lot of mental as well as social stigma. Initially, with the outbreak of the disease not only the individuals who got infected with COVID-19 have to face this social stigma and isolation but even the health care workers had to face the social stigma. There were several instances reported through media including news channels, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and blogs where the health care workers were asked to vacate their residential apartments. Social distancing and lockdown were the initial measures instigated for preparedness and to start the fight against a disease, for curtailment of which everyone was clueless. Time to time communication of measures to be followed for its prevention as well as propagation of positive information on the important and essential role being played by healthcare workers through media changed the perception of people in the society.

The way information is propagated also has an important role to play. Emergency evacuation of Indian students stranded from various places in the world including Wuhan and its telecast on several platforms created a fear among general public about its uncontrollable nature. But the mass propagation of measures for containment of its spread by use of masks, social distancing, hand hygiene through caller tune of phone, advertisement, online competitions among school children, time to time release of guidelines from Ministry of health and family welfare on

social media, the Aarogya Setu app, etc., came up as a rescuer. Education and propagation of daily exercise or practice of yoga internationally helped to an extent in relieving the stress and anxiety across all ages and various sections of the society.^[2] Thus social marketing plays a very important role in promoting primary care.^[3]

Role of health mela and camping for creating awareness among the community has now been taken over by these social platforms. But the role of physicians still remains of paramount importance. Communicating the correct information in a right manner is the need of the hour. As the pandemic is still on there are uncertainties about the timelines for normalization of the conditions. Physicians need to increase the use of social platforms for educating the general public. Educative videos with authenticated information about the diseases which do not require frequent visits to the hospital, or those emergency situations which need immediate attention should be propagated both at national as well as local levels. Telemedicine services should be utilized for efficient communication about the disease and efforts should be made to remove the social stigma associated with COVID-19.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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