



## The Enigma of COVID-19 in India

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### Editorial

In January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a new coronavirus disease COVID-19, to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. WHO stated that there is a high risk of COVID-19 spreading to other countries around the world. In March 2020, WHO made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic.

How long will this pandemic last? When will we find a treatment or vaccine? Which drug should we give our patients? Will we run out of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)? When will everyone return to work? We find ourselves in a time of great economic, social, and medical uncertainty.

In the wake of A/H1N1pdm 2009 influenza pandemic the emergence of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS 2012) it was recognized that the effectiveness of a responsiveness to a pandemic threat dependent critically on the speed and focus of that response. The WHO review ethics committee approved a global master protocol for the ISARICCCP and endorsed its use in the outbreaks of public health interest.

According to WHO guidelines the largest COVID-19 first Janata curfew was called for on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 by our health policy makers of India when COVID-19 is in Stage I. From March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 onwards total lockdown was called for a period of 21 days up to April 15<sup>th</sup>. During this period all non-essential services were stopped and the essential items were available at certain times only. Before April 15<sup>th</sup> government reviewed the corona trends in the country and lockdown was further extended up to May 3<sup>rd</sup>. As on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 42,546 corona positive cases are identified across India and suspecting a possible surge in cases the lockdown was further extended to May 17<sup>th</sup>. Later independent decision was given to separate states regarding further extension of lockdown. Number of corona positive cases were recorded 7,67,000 cases and with the mortality of 1.46 per 1 lakh population till today. Indian population is 1.3 billion across 29 states. Health inequalities, discrepancies in economic and social settings and differences in cultural values exist. The preponderance and response to COVID-19 have differed at different states.

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We have taken the following steps to mobilize and organize the nation so that we can achieve control. Our health policy makers of asked every state to appoint similar state wide authority. In India till May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 42,546 cases were recorded hence ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) called for household diagnostic testing in the next 2 weeks to relax the lockdown period. During the second lockdown period India was divided in to 3 zones based on number of corona positive cases into green, yellow, red zones with different quarantine guidelines in each zone. The immigrant daily laborers are allowed to migrate to their own states.

All corporate and private hospitals were closed except emergency medical stores and all patients were diverted to government hospitals with separate isolation wards and adequate PPEs to health care workers to take care of isolated, ventilated patients. Through mass media the health policy makers of India addressed the entire nation at regular intervals to inspire and mobilize the public to use surgical masks, hand sensitizers and to maintain social distancing and made sure that everyone followed the safety precautions. Regarding the treatment aspect of COVID-19 positive patients clinical care was widely improved by effective testing, isolation and other supportive care. ICMR research is undergoing to make an effective vaccine now in phase 1 clinical trials. Indian scientists who have voluntarily formed Indian scientist response to COVID-19 to fight about the misinformation about the disease. Numerous randomized control trials are underway to about the virus impact on the society, its genetic makeup and avenues of treatment.

In spite of low GDP for public healthcare system in India with effective lockdown the government able to control the exponential raise of cases to an extent. However, further awareness regarding the disease both at administrative level and public levels will help greatly in controlling the corona pandemic.

NEJM publishes successful and safe phase 1 trial results of mRNA Vaccine by US-based Moderns, Russia becomes the First Nation to complete phase 3 trials of its Vaccine, Astra Zeneca speeds up

its clinical studies process while Merck chief says Vaccines under development are not guaranteed to work, July 2020.