Commentary

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The impact of COVID-19 imposed lockdown in India in 2020

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INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 pandemic as public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) on January 30, 2019. Lockdown was introduced as a preventive strategy to reduce the community transmission of the severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS CoV-2). On 25th March 2020, Prime Minister on India announced countrywide lockdown. Measures like social distancing, restriction of mass gathering, closure of educational institutions, wearing face mask, hand hygiene etc. were greatly advertised to create awareness and bring about a behavior change. This paper throws light into some unseen circumstances and challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic imposed lockdown.

Socio-economic and healthcare crises

Nation-wide lockdown has not only led to financial crises among all social class people of the country but also major lag in nutrition status and healthcare of the population. These crises halt the successes gained in the previous years by the effective functioning of the national health programs.²

Plight of migrants

Usually, migrant workers, laborers from rural India migrate to urban cities looking for opportunities, livelihood and better standard of living. The lockdown has severely affected not only their employment, income, food and uncertain future but also the movement of people.

With road and railway links suspended, walking back home was the only option left to reunite with their families.^{3,4}

Mental health of women during the lockdown

Lockdown has posed abrupt disruption among the family communication pattern, parental working style, household chores and art of parenting towards children. Closure of daycares, schools, offices and work from home for non-essential services has caused increased stress level among working women as well. Women being on the receiving end of things have shown increased anxiety, stress and depression symptoms during the lockdown compared to men. Women being the marginalized section of our society, needs immediate attention for this impact on mental health.^{5,6}

Technology that saves patients

Preventive measures against the pandemic should protect the people from the dual burden of non-communicable and communicable diseases. Virtual reality played a very beneficial role in telemedicine, by creating awareness, taking preventive measures against contagious diseases, and even guiding through treatment of diseases. Live video streaming, also helped in improving the surveillance system of the ongoing situation.⁷

Newer innovative technologies like internet of medical things (IoMT) has paved a way forward in treating orthopedic patients during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.⁸

Virtual classes – a stressful classroom for teachers and students

Online classes for school students has increased the stress of teaching among teachers. Holding the attention of young children continuously during online class is a great challenge. However, the true essence of walking through the classroom and interacting with the students is greatly missed. While students greatly miss the school environment while spending more time online, increased screen time in children has always been a concern. 'Pragyata' new guideline by Union Human Resource Department recommends maximum screen time of three hours per day. 10

Rise in internet usage

India's internet usage rose by 13% since lockdown, the daily average consumption in this period was 9% higher, says Telecom department.¹¹ The daily data usage was as high as 18 GB data per day during lockdown.¹²

Lockdown was a blessing!

Couples who were on infertility treatment managed to conceive naturally on their own. Lifestyle changes, freedom from stress of work, spending quality time between couples, abstinence from certain addictions due to non-availability were few healthy behavioral changes which helped to tune the biological clock.^{13,14} In short, a stress free life was all, it required.

Other survivors in the ecosystem

There seem to be positive impact on animals and birds during lockdown unlike in case of humans. Limited human interference and reduction in the pollution levels have helped them to reclaim their space in the ecosystem like the partial migratory birds having extended their stay little longer.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

The pandemic imposed lockdown, to some extent has helped in prevention and control of infectious diseases. However, it is time to address other newly adapted lifestyle changes and rising burden of mental health issues.

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