

The lockdown bought us time for preparing to ramp up our capacities

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Need for effective public health approach on the ground to control COVID-19, says Dr V K Paul, Member, NITI Aayog

Promote Telemedicine, keeping the doctor-patient relationship and trust intact

Stakeholder collaboration for removing stigma and improving mental well-being

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Dr V K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog emphasized that in order to control COVID-19, it is imperative that the public health approach should be implemented effectively on the ground.

Addressing a webinar 'Public Health For Healthy Life', organised on the second day of FICCI's Virtual Healthcare & Hygiene Expo (VHHE) 2020, Dr Paul said, "We must look at the positive stories of COVID control. The public health approach to contain the disease through trace, test, isolate, quarantine and timely referral must be implemented on the ground effectively by the government, civil agencies, communities and all concerned stakeholders."

Highlighting the role of community participation, Dr Paul said that it can play a major role if we work in an organized way by supporting those who have tested positive and staying isolated. "Young people must be

involved in community participation for the containment of COVID-19. The heart of prevention is individual behaviour. We have to look at how we ensure positive behaviour that contains the spread of the virus," he added.

Emphasising on five pillars for pandemic response, Dr Paul said, "Surveillance, containment and disease control should be the priority. Preparedness on part of hospitals for assured access to ambulance and care is also required. Home care should be reinforced and made more efficient by following prescribed protocols, along with the safety of the elderly and other people at home. We also need to protect the vulnerable population, people with co-morbidities and improve immunity through our time-tested traditional system of medicine."

Highlighting the importance of technology and Telemedicine, Dr Paul said "This is a historical time for telemedicine and we must promote it to keep the doctor-patient relationship and trust intact," He added, telemedicine will also help us in addressing the non-COVID patients, given the high burden of NCDs and other infectious diseases in the country. He urged FICCI to take the lead in developing a multipronged approach to telemedicine, through non-profit partnerships; and to come up with a public campaign to remove any stigma related to COVID-19 and promote mental well-being.

Dr Paul also released the FICCI Recommendations on further Strategy for COVID Containment. These recommendations have emanated from the FICCI Roundtable with leading epidemiologists, public health experts and members from the healthcare industry that was organised virtually to deliberate on the future strategy for COVID containment earlier this month.

Dr Sangita Reddy, President, FICCI said that India is in the middle of fighting this battle, but we should also congratulate ourselves, government, public health response system, and all other agencies for the tremendous efforts and positive response in managing the crisis. "Our death rates are lower, and the lockdown bought us time for preparing to ramp up our capacities. We stayed connected with medicine and the world to fight this crisis."

Mr Ashok Kakkar, Chair, FICCI Swasth Bharat Task Force & Sr. MD, Varian Medical Systems International India Pvt. Ltd said, "Role and responsibility of individuals and community cannot be undermined in the current COVID scenario. We all need to realize that the responsibility of our health lies in our hands, and should work towards the key behavioral changes for maintaining hygiene, health and fitness to tackle the virus."

Dr Amarjeet Singh, Professor & Head- Dept. of Community Medicine & School of Public Health, PGIMER, Chandigarh; Dr Samir Parikh, Consultant Psychiatrist, Director-Dept. of Mental Health & Behavioral Sciences, Fortis National Mental Health Program, Fortis Healthcare; Dr Suneela Garg, National President-Elect - IAPSM, Director Professor HAG, Ex-Head (CM) Sub Dean, MAMC & Head Community Medicine, FMS; Dr Subodh Gupta, Professor & HOD- Community Medicine, Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Sewagram India also shared their perspectives on various aspects like health promotion, mental well-

being, issues of stigma, gender and differently-abled, during the panel discussion. A COVID self-assessment and action tool, for community preparedness and empowerment, that has been approved by NITI Aayog for 6 lakh panchayats was also shared in the panel discussion.

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